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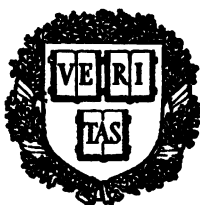
The Children of the old Stone House



Lucy Colton Wells

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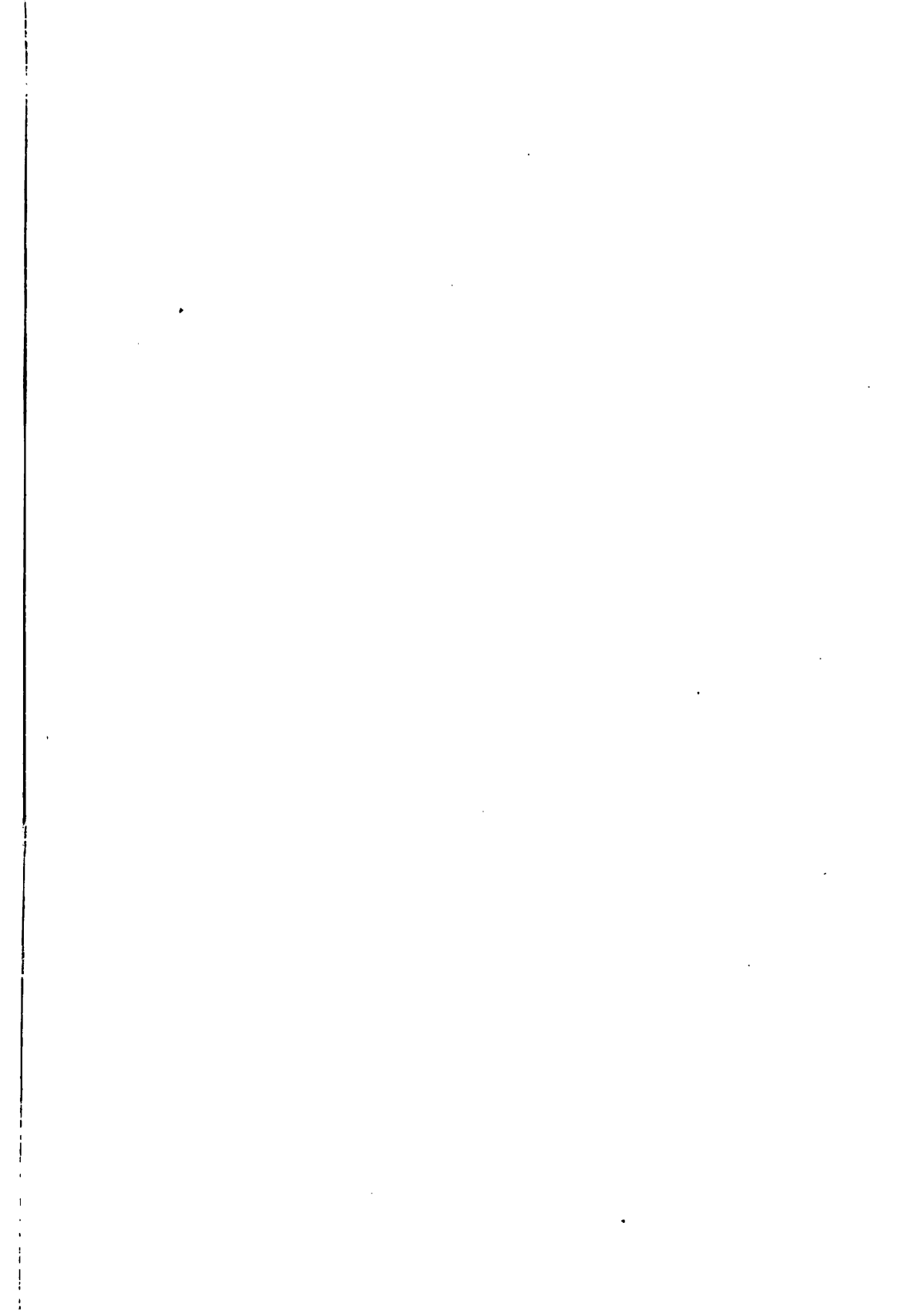
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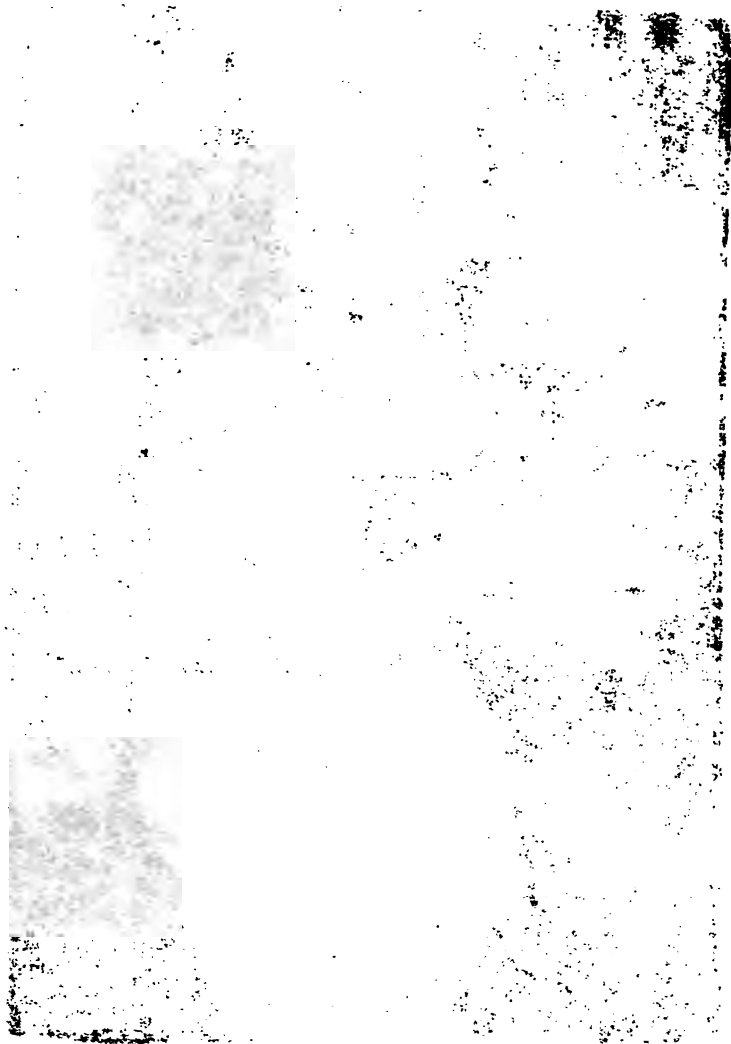
The CHILDREN OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

By LUCY COLLETT

FRONTISPICE BY
HARRET REE

COVER DESIGN BY
SARAH W. SMITH

THE NEW AMSTEL MAGAZINE COMPANY
" " WILMINGTON, DELAWARE " "



The CHILDREN OF THE
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**This Book is dedicated to the memory of those
who loved
The Old Stone House**

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FOREWORD

WHEN I read a story to my children, the question is sure to come, "Mother, is this a really truly?" If "Yes" is the answer, the children's interest is assured. During the many years as I have told these simple tales to my own and other children, I have wondered at the unfailing interest. No repetition seemed to dim it. This fact has given me courage to send this little book into the world.

L. C. W.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHILDREN

“MILLY, you and Bettina may come in now to see the great surprise,” said Mrs. Gannett, “but you must promise not to tease to stay long. Mrs. Cooper can be very cross, you know, and you want to be so well-mannered that she’ll ask you to come in again to see Mamma and the new baby.”

“Oh!” breathed Milly, with a little contented sigh, “To think that we really have one at last! How I did pray for a sister so very long a time!”

“No wonder *you* think it’s lovely—and I do, too—a little—only I prayed for a brother and you got your prayer and I didn’t get mine,” grumbled Bettina.

“But, Bettina, you know boys can be such teases and they’re not a bit like dolls to dress; no hair-ribbons and no sashes. I know you’ll be glad some day that I got my prayer,” said Milly, soothingly.

“P’raps I’ll get mine and have a baby brother next June!” said Bettina with great assurance in her voice. They were walking up the long flight of stairs that led from a stone terrace to the lower verandah, holding hands. Bettina’s eyes were in the clouds and her

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heaven, and her trunk, with a cherry satin dress in it, were her two passions.

The children entered the wide hall and, led by their nurse, tip-toed into the darkened room. There sat fat Mrs. Cooper, and on her lap a wriggling, crying mite of a red baby.

"Oh!" said Milly. "Poor little thing—why are you putting that spoon into her eye instead of into her mouth?"

This substitute nurse could not see very well even with her "good eye," and as that was looking towards the dark, she did not know that she was feeding the poor, hungry baby in this Tantalus fashion. All this happened before the era of the merciful trained nurse, and Mrs. Faxon had generously given up the only capable nurse in Davenport to a delicate friend whose need was greater than her own.

"Oh, Mamma!" said Bettina, after giving Mrs. Faxon a "bear hug," "shall we keep this one? I say, let's swap it for a white little boy with yellow curls, who could play a violin some day."

Poor Mamma was leaning on her elbow, trying to see why the baby was crying so pitifully, but Milly was opening the Venetian blind, and, turning the rocking-

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chair, while the nurse half rose with the screaming baby in her arms.

"Thank you, Milly, you're a little lady; now the sweet lamb shall have her dinner, so we'll get her quiet before her father comes up to see her at recess time."

"I didn't want the children to see the baby until their father came in with them," said Mrs. Faxon in a disappointed way. Milly was kneeling on the floor, patting and kissing her mother's soft, white hand.

"We'll just stay 'till he comes, Mamma; it's most time, for I know the French class is in the dining-room just before the recess bell rings, and I saw M. Blairveau through the window as we went up the verandah steps. Bettina won't speak a word, will you, Baby Faxon?" Milly though only two-and-a-half years older than her sister, could often manage Betty when the others gave up in despair. People were often greatly amused at the elder sister's manners, for she still talked indistinctly herself. She said one day, "Isn't it coorus? Baby Faxon can't say 'cumfomum;' she has to say 'cumtum,' and she can't say 'hanksfit;' she has to say 'hanky.'"

At the home of the three spinster ladies, where the children went on bright afternoons, ginger cakes were given them regularly, but, one day, as no ginger cakes

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appeared, Bettina sighed and then said, "Please give us our ginger cakes and then we can go home!" Milly told her mother of this improper speech and Bettina was forbidden ever to ask for food again. The next day she played with the marbles in the round box; looked at the wax flowers, and patted the stuffed birds, and at last said, "I can't ask you for ginger cakes, Mamma says, but if you offer them I may say 'yes.'" How the spinsters smiled, though they felt rather guilty in so doing. But we must return to the new baby.

Now Papa's quick step was heard, as he bounded up the winding stairs and entered the room.

"Oh!" said Milly, springing to his arms, "Papa! even if she is red, she is cunning, and I prayed for her and got her, so of course she's mine and I've named her, and guess what?"

"Tell me the name you have chosen, my Darling," was Papa's question.

"Oh, Frances, after you, Papa, for it can be a girl's name, and I just love Frankie for a pet name, and that will please Bettina, for it makes the baby almost a boy if you call her that, and then she won't be mixed up with you; please say 'yes.'"

Mr. Faxon put his little daughter down on the chair,

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and, bending over his wife, kissed her and whispered something in her ear. The bright smile with the "Yes, Dearest," made Milly bound up. "It's 'Yes,' Oh, how lovely! How proud I feel! Now Baby Faxon, you mustn't mind, for there'll always be a tiny baby and you'll name the next one, can't she Mamma? You know I'm your big sister and I have to come first in 'portant things."

"I fink the new baby might be called 'Fanny' after my doll."

"Oh, no, Bettina, they'd get mixed up, and Fanny wouldn't like it one bit; 'Frankie's' much nicer. Come, I'll make a necklace for Fanny." Off Bettina went, her plump arms and legs seeming loath to leave the room. The Old Stone House was selected as a school for a few boys. At this time there were twelve internes, and a day school of twenty boys. The plan of the house and the grounds will show how much there was to make the care of the pupils an easy thing in recreation hours. The carpenter shop, the bowling alley, the gymnasium, the stables for those who kept their own riding-horses, the terraced gardens, the croquet ground, the river, the boats and swimming lessons, and the summer camp, as well as the dancing classes in the wide hall for dark winter months; the wonderful

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coasting in the driveway and on the crusted snow in the long orchard, were all attractions which made Mr. Faxon's school a joy and not a torment to the boys. The dressing for tea, and seeing Mrs. Faxon in the drawing-room every evening, the quiet games of whist and cribbage; the little children brought in for dessert, and just enough en evidence to have the boys feel honored by the chance of seeing them; all the atmosphere of a refined Christian home made the vacations to these twelve pupils only a time for counting the days until they could return to the Old Stone House. Many lived too far in the South to go home for six weeks after the summer camp was over. On the boys' birthdays, an old English plum pudding, crackling in the midst of the blue flame of burning brandy, was placed by Bridget before the honored boy.

Milly and Bettina were great pets of these boys. The play hours had regulations, so the children were never permitted to go into the orchard or gymnasium or gardens during the boys' hours for enjoying them. How the boys would vie with each other in choosing acceptable gifts for these babies' birthdays! How, in after years, when they were men in college, would they cheerfully use their precious "cuts" that they might not miss the festivities of Milly's and Bettina's

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natal days! One pupil was especially devoted to Milly, and, when visiting in Davenport, gave up a grand dinner party at the eleventh hour as he remembered that it was Milly's birthday and he would not disappoint her for the world.

Little Frankie's popularity was a matter of great uncertainty, as her food did not agree with her and colic owned her body and soul. How she cried night and day, until every man and maid servant tried to quiet her only to give it up in despair. It was during the summer months, and while pretty Aunt Delia was a guest at the Old Stone House. She was the unmarried sister of Mr. Faxon and his six brothers; the other sister had died, making the spoiling of this one only too natural. Mrs. Faxon would often sigh, "Oh, if Delia had only been homely!" In 'one way she might just as well have had no beauty, for the Faxon children did not realize the tone of her far-famed golden hair, the rose-leaf quality of her skin, nor the daintiness of the gowns she wore, nor the faultless form they covered. She was just managing, snappy Aunt Delia, whose visits were dreaded by every one of the five servants, and all the "extra help" who came in, as well as by the children. One little girl said to Milly, "I saw your pretty aunt in church; my! how I'd love

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to have parasol, shoes and hat all to match a blue silk dress."

"Oh," said Milly, "Is Aunt Delia pretty? I didn't know it."

At the close of a very hot afternoon, when Mrs. Faxon had lain down for a little rest from the crying baby, Aunt Delia burst into the room.

"I have at last completed all the arrangements, Susanne; I know you would never have the resolution to do anything so sensible. The woman is a clean, healthy person, and her own baby shows how strong the mother is. She expects your baby to-morrow. The charges per week are wonderfully moderate. You can see Frankie after a while but at first the woman prefers that no one should come out there. To think of what my visit has turned out to be after all my plans! Now we shall have some peace."

"My baby—go to a strange woman to board! Delia, what do you mean? Does Francis know this—is it one is a mother but a mother!"

"Of his? Gracious no! He is all sentiment and no sense. I mean to be the salvation of you by seeing that this baby cries somewhere out of hearing. All English people do this with their children, and many of our rich Americans are beginning to see the wisdom of it. Social life should not hang on the whims of a spoiled baby!"

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Mrs. Faxon buried her head in the pillow. "Delia, leave my room!" In her heart she had one longing—if her husband could only know this before Aunt Delia carried out her plan! At that moment a quick step was heard. It seemed like an answer to prayer, and in an instant the baby's father, his beaming eyes, his joyous laugh, his splendid manhood gave a sense of strength and protection.

"Susie, darling, Professor Kane was visiting the camp, and when I suggested running off to see you and our sick child, he gladly took my place in looking after the boys. I felt I must come. What—you won't look up to see me?"

She did not look up but said, with sobs and tears, "O, Francis,—Delia—the baby—don't let her drive off Frankie to-morrow to that woman in the country! No "What can all this mean?" But just then Miss Delia, in sweeping train of soft lace, pattered into the room, "O, Francis, has Susie told you of my arrangement? I know change of air and country milk and a rest from big children's noise and Susanne's over-zealous care will save your baby's life and save us all from a lunatic asylum; with fretting by day and screaming by night she has driven me to distraction, so I have arranged every detail. The layette is being packed now by Mrs.

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Gannett, so she and I can take the baby over to Greenhill Farm to-morrow early while it is still cool."

Mr. Faxon's face grew more and more angry, his hand that held his wife's hot one was actually cold. "Delia, this Old Stone House is my child's home, and it is yours only when you share it with her and behave as if you had a woman's heart in your breast. You have other brothers and other friends. Perhaps Mrs. Gannett had better pack your trunk if you have ceased to be happy under the roof that shelters my precious children!"

"Indeed, Francis, your sentiment is beyond my comprehension! Poor Susie—I'm thankful I'm not married!"

Miss Delia swept from the room and not only were orders given to pack her trunk before morning, but in an hour's time she was sitting on the deck of the New York boat, and telegrams were sent to friends to meet her at a summer resort on the Sound.

Little Frankie seemed to improve from that day, but it was a long time before Miss Delia came again. I wish I could add that when she did arrive, the children and servants welcomed her, but alas! although Frankie was no longer a sick baby, there were always other

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annoyances she complained of. She would often say to Milly "Your cousin Eva has such good manners, and Bettina, how noisy you are compared to your cousin Alice! Frankie is far worse than her cousin Tom, even if he is a boy and just her age!" These remarks fell unheeded, as when the cousins met they at once discussed the ever lively subject of Aunt Delia and found that the same sentences reversed were uttered when she visited her brother Wilton. Milly's obstinacy became strength of character in comparison to Eva's lack of it. Eva was told how quiet and yet how capable Milly was; Alice was tired of hearing Bettina held up as a genius in music and a wonder in her ideas of color; even mischievous Frankie had virtues, she became generous, imaginative when contrasted to Tom whose slow, lisping ways were called stupid by Aunt Delia. But this poor old world can profit even by faults and vices. The sight of a very crooked person makes children at once straighten their shoulders. Positive influence, whether we long to imitate the virtues, or make a vow ever hereafter to avoid the sins, is after all, the real teacher; the Laodicean might as well remain unborn. And so the unloved Aunt Delia, in spite of herself, was helpful to these Faxon children. Whenever Milly saw a sign of pride in Bettina's

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face reflected in the glass, she would exclaim, "O, Bettina, don't get vain! What are looks? Think of Aunt Delia, she's pretty and who loves her?" Or, "Don't get too fond of clothes the way Aunt Delia is!" When Frankie or Susie would show signs of selfishness, each member of the family would cry out in turn: "I do believe that child will become a second Aunt Delia!" This was of more value than any sermon or any picture of future torment.

As Millicent and Bettina grew older, and men friends and admirers appeared at the Old Stone House, they were often over-critical and very fond of ridiculing the weak points they saw. Bettina, especially, would make up the brightest rhymes about their faults and failings until Mrs. Faxon would lift a finger of warning: "Oh, don't be like Aunt Delia, she always dwelt upon what each man had not, and even the angel Gabriel would have some point of dress or residence that would disqualify him for her. Beware of imitating that trait!"

Bettina when only twelve years old wrote several romances. She drew the pictures for some of them herself, and cut out appropriate pictures from magazines for others. The three volumes, named "A Boarding School Tragedy," was the most thrilling. On rainy

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Sundays even Milly would listen to every word of it over and over again. The heroine was so uniformly gentle and good and unaccomplishing that she might have really been a parlor statue; but the central figure was a girl with the worst sort of red hair, small greenish eyes that flashed fire and cruelty and quelled the courage of the teachers. Her outrageous acts were unusual and terrible, but the finale was the harrowing deed of setting fire to the school at night and starting the blaze under the bed of the gentle blonde whose golden hair was singed and who escaped with her life by a miracle through her knowledge of gymnastics. The name of this fiend-like pupil was "Delia."

Bettina had stopped praying for a baby brother. She had saved up her pin money, and, through Patrick's search at auction sales, had secured a dilapidated violin. This was a secret from the family. Patrick had made her a bow from Brown Bessie's tail, and oh! the thrill of joy when alone, away off in the carriage house or in the end of the long attic, she conquered a few notes on "Linny," as she named her precious violin! Patrick kept the secret, and Millicent was the next to share it; a heavy cold caught in the late autumn made Milly tell that she knew what Bettina had done to become suddenly so ill. She made Mrs. Faxon promise

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not to take away the precious "Linny."

"I am all eagerness myself over her love for her violin, dear child, and for her birthday I will let you buy her a fine new bow, and I will have that noted teacher from Hartford come down every week to give her lessons."

Milly's joy knew no bounds and Bettina was translated. She felt now that a brother of any description might hurt her precious "Linny," and she therefore received the last little sister's advent with content.

"Remember, I'm to name her, Papa," she said as she looked at the very pretty little baby all pink and white, with a shock of coal-black hair which, in a few months by some miracle, was transformed into a golden mane. "Oh, I thought this was my baby to name!" and Papa held the soft bundle close to his neck. "This little last rose of summer—August thirty-first, you know, is her birthday. I have my name chosen."

"So have I," broke in Bettina. "Let's both whisper the names to Mamma and see which is best."

Mrs. Faxon's eyes beamed with humor and joy. "How odd, Francis! You two have chosen the same name, and I feel highly flattered—my name that I loathe—and have always declared no daughter of mine should be burdened with—Susanne!"

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"Oh, isn't that lovely!" cried Milly. "A dear little Susie, and I know she'll be the prettiest and the sweetest and the best of all of us!"

"I guess she'll be spoiled and horrid," was Bettina's rejoinder, "though I do think she's awfully cunning now; but she can't ever touch my violin!"

"She may have everything I own in the world," cooed Milly, as she took the tiny baby with the hands that were strong yet gentle. And, indeed, in the long years to come, what did she ever withhold from Susie!

Frankie was not in the room just then, but entered crying excitedly.

"Oh, a new big doll, a live one, let me hug her! I've dot free cents in my potet boot and I'll go ight down teet and buy hoopstirts for her!"

How Papa laughed!

Frankie was a strong child now; so wilful and mischievous, so amusing, so difficult in every way to train or control that Mrs. Faxon would often say, "Could it be the poor, half-blind nurse that made the wrong beginning, or is it because she's been delicate and we never have trained her as we did the other children?" Mr. Faxon smiled, "Perhaps she has taken my failings with my name! Perhaps the originality of my ideas that you so often praise were evidenced to my mother

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only by mischief and pranks, when I was a tiny one! We have need of patience with all these conflicting temperaments under one roof; Frankie's trying ways may show us how to understand these other little girls. It is the difference in children that make family life the best discipline in the world." As the years passed, Mrs. Faxon realized the wisdom of all these sayings, and she, like the sweet mother of old, often pondered them in her heart.

Bettina's utter lack of practical ideas was a source of amazement to her parents. She had a passion for purses of all descriptions, and whenever money was given her, she straightway bought a new one, and then bemoaned the fact that though Milly had but one purse, that one was always heavy with bright coins.

The children wore round combs during play hours, as ribbons slipped off and were lost, but even the combs had become so short-lived that Mr. Faxon took the matter in hand. "If you keep one comb, Bettina, as long as Milly does, I'll bring you a gift from New York." Bettina was so afraid she would forget the date of her new comb that she put it on the first page in her Bible. How Mrs. Faxon laughed when she was showing a friend the morning hymn which Mr. Faxon had composed and written in the Bible of each

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of his four daughters in his peculiarly attractive hand, and underneath, in crooked, cramped writing, with no capitals, was, "bought a comb—february 7."

Although later in her life, Bettina had the sanctified spirit of a New England nun and influenced each one in the household in the daily fulfilling of duty, in youth she was very funny in theological argument. When saying her prayers one night, Mrs. Faxon reminded her that she had left out the orphans. "Oh," she replied, "you mean dose same ickkle orphans I've been praying for dese tree years? If God hasn't blessed 'em yet, He needn't!" She was so fond of drawing that every description of greatness had to be contrasted until her eyes could see. She said one day, "If God is so great dat He can sit on dat highest hill and wash His feet in dee idder, den I tall Him a big God."

Bettina had heard the tale of a distant relative, an austere Connecticut minister, who refused to give his wife a new bonnet. She was spirited enough to resent this, and, having no money, sold a family bureau and purchased a bonnet of conspicuous beauty with the proceeds. She came late to church, having taken so long to adjust properly this new glory, and her husband stopped abruptly in the middle of his sermon and, pointing at his blushing wife, thundered: "Here

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comes a woman with a bureau on her head!" Bettina often wished that her mother would sell the piano and buy a hat, and then if her father happened to be preaching the first Sunday she wore it, Bettina wondered if he would stop to say, "Here comes my wife with a piano on her head."

It was Bettina who heard Mrs. Scott Siddons recite and noted her blushes when the applause became almost deafening. Bettina afterwards gave a concert and a recitation combined. Suddenly she announced, "Now it is time to blush," and drew up pieces of pink tissue paper from the neck of her dress and fastened them with beeswax to her cheeks. How like her in after years, when deceit of any kind was loudly proclaimed from the housetops!

When Susie was five years old, Mr. Faxon decided to remove his school to New York. There were so many boys every year that he had to refuse, and yet he could not increase the number of pupils without changing the whole idea of the Home School. Milly and Bettina needed then to study with other children, and, as there was no private school in Davenport, Mrs. Faxon decided to have a class of girls in the school rooms. Mr. Faxon took the train for New York on Monday mornings and returned on Friday in time for

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a late tea. He devoted Saturday to his children. On Sunday he preached in the mission chapel across the river and was also interested in Sunday school work, but his three evenings belonged to dear Mamma. During vacations the joy in the Old Stone House knew no bounds, for not only was "Darly Farler" there, but favorite boys would come up from college, and there was no end to the frolic and the entertainments. Puppet shows, plays, circuses, concerts were given. Bettina's violin, Milly's guitar, Allen King's clarionet, Lee Carter's flute and Frankie's attempts on the piano made music the beginning and end, if not the middle, of all performances.

The seasons followed each other in happy succession; the faithful men-servants and maid-servants, the parents, the children and the guests keeping the spirit of love and sympathy, mirth and frolic, always ruling the Old Stone House.

I hope that the patient reader feels now a slight acquaintance with these four children, whose checkered experiences fill the pages of this little book.

THE CHILDREN OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE STORIES

MR. FAXON, a clergyman and teacher.

MRS. FAXON, his wife.

MILLICENT,
BETTINA,
FRANKIE,
SUSIE, } the children.

AUNT DELIA, Mr. Faxon's sister.

UNCLE WILTON, Mr. Faxon's brother.

MRS. GANNETT, the nurse.

JIM, her son.

BRIDGET, a maid.

MIKE,
PATRICK, } gardeners.

ANN, a cook.

SADIE HILL, a playmate.

DOLLY FENN, a New York girl.

DR. PEMBERTON, the family physician.

ALLEN KING,
LEE CARTER, } pupils of Mr. Faxon.

I

THE BIRDCAGE

“SUSIE, DEAR,” said her mother, sweetly but firmly, “don’t eat any of this birdcage, for I am afraid the green part would make you sick. I’m sorry, but it is safest to keep it a little while for an ornament and then destroy it.”

Mrs. Faxon had opened a box of French bon bons sent by a dear friend who had just come from Paris. The lovely colors and designs of this exquisite candies had fascinated the children; Millicent and Bettina were as eager as the younger ones over the division of them. In those days confectionery of this sort could not be bought in towns—perhaps only in the one large French candy store in New York could they be found—so the children’s enthusiasm was to be forgiven. Each one chose in turn: Millicent’s first choice was a half-blown rose, inside the pink bud was white cream mixed with nuts; Bettina’s choice was a violin of soft brown, the strings marked wonderfully in yellow; Frankie’s eyes fell upon a fat bunny, so real, with pink eyes and the cunningest tail; but as they chose slowly Susie saw just one beautiful object, a pink and green parrot with crimson head, in a cage of gold. She

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hardly breathed as each one named her choice. She wondered how any one could overlook her darling "pallot." And now it was hers! The others chose in turn again and again, but Susie only gazed at the cage content. Her mother quietly put a few simple candies into a box, saying: "If these are too rich, Susie will have the joy of giving them to Mrs. Gannett and the others." All this had happened two days before, and now, the precious cage was not to be hers after all!

"Oh, Mamma," she pleaded with tears in her eyes, "do let me keep it always for my own! I will promise not to bite it nor taste it. I won't even lick it; I'll just carry it gently around and then put it in the dolls' house for the dolls' pallot."

Milly begged in her tender-hearted way: "Oh, do let her have it, Mamma! She's almost four years old and she knows how to keep a promise. Susie, every time you want to bite it, just tell Milly and she'll give you a tiny taste of one of hers. You may have your cage to hang in the dolls' house, and it will last for ever so long. I know Susie will not break her word."

Mrs. Faxon yielded to the elder sister's wish.

Days went by. The little yellow birdcage still hung untouched, a joy to the dolls' eyes and to Susie's heart. The moment of temptation had not come. Susie often

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wanted to taste the shining bars of the cage, but she had a sense of honor unusual in one so young, and she seldom broke her word. One day Frankie had been in a mischievous mood: after other experiments she had tried to make syrup for soda water out of the candy that Mrs. Faxon had put into the box for Susie. She first tried to soak the candy in water, then, the syrup not forthcoming, she put it on the stove to heat. It was beginning to melt and the soda was ready to pinch into the glass when Frankie heard the dog barking. Out she flew to find a most curious old beggar standing on the steps. He was dressed in a half-flowing cloak, and was playing on an old fiddle. His eyes were shut, his hair was long, and his high squeaky voice as he sang was irresistible. Frankie listened a moment and then ran about the house collecting pennies for the musician. As she was giving them to him she heard Susie cry, "Oh, the syrup!" 'Twas too late! Only a few brown bubbles remained of the precious bon bons. Susie sat down and cried. "We shall never know how the yellow one tasted, and perhaps it is the only kind that makes soda syrup; oh, dear!" That evening Susie begged very hard to sit up just a little longer so that Milly could "rock to her and sing to her"—as she always said—in the soft firelight.

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"No, Susie, tonight Mamma and I are going down-town to a lecture, and it begins early. I'm sorry, for Milly loves to rock her darling baby sister."

"O Milly, I can't go to sleep! I never can when I know you and Mamma are out. Let me have something nice to take to bed—something new—I always have my doll, Milly, so I don't mean her. Oh, I know!" and her eyes grew eager, "Milly, do let me have this lovely thing—it's my birdcage—I do love it so! I know I could go to sleep quickly if I just knew I had it."

"But, Darling, your hot hands will make it sticky; you could put it on the other pillow, and not touch it. Would that be fun?"

"Oh, yes; Milly! Then the first thing in the morning I could see if the little candy bird sang, and if he couldn't I'd sing for him."

Milly ran for the cage, and when the nurse and Mamma kissed Susie good-night there was the birdcage high on the other pillow.

"Remember, Susie, those colors might make you sick, so you must keep your promise; no tasting, even; you are mother's little 'truly girl,' and she knows she can trust you."

Mrs. Gannett said, aside to Mrs. Faxon: "I'll slip it away as soon as the little darling's asleep."

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The bed in which Susie slept was a four-poster, and was so placed that one corner was by the edge of a window. The curtain of the bed was drawn, but through the lace border Susie could see the panes of glass. This window opened upon a wide verandah. The shutters outside and the blinds within were not closed unless storm raged.

Susie let the cage rest quietly for some time; then her little fingers touched it gently; then held it; then Susie remembered that all the colored candies were gone and how like the yellow ones the gold bars of the cage looked. If she licked just one bar and then told Milly it would not be so very dreadful! Oh, how “liscious” that taste was! In the very dim light she could barely see the cage. At last the bar bent—it broke—and the piece fell into her cunning little mouth. Now she could almost touch the bird—one bar more and her fingers could go through and just feel if the soft pink part of the bird felt like a real pallot! There! The bar was gone, and her fingers reached the pretty feathers. At that moment what an awful noise struck her ear! Bells of all sorts and tones, loud and long, fast and slow—oh, it was a fire—such a dreadful fire! In terror she leaned up to peep out of the tiny window space. Then she could hear excited voices;

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Bridget running up to open the verandah door in the hall; Mrs. Gannett whispering, "Oh, don't wake my pet! Be quiet, all of you!" Then Bettina, forgetting all in her terror over fire, cried, "Oh, I must see it! I won't take cold! Is it near? Oh, if Mamma were only home!"

There was a volunteer fire service in Davenport, and recently in the wild wintry weather there had been very severe fires which had frightened the Faxon children. They were highly imaginative and deeply sympathetic, and, as their great stone house was on a hill, even from the verandah, without climbing to the cupola, they could see the fires in the town as well as across and up and down the river.

Frankie suddenly cried, "Oh, I can smell smoke!" And after that a sudden glow of crimson yellow light flashed through the window right upon Susie's pillow, and then covered the broken birdcage with suffused glory. "Oh, I ate my cage—I broke my promise—and God is doing all this to punish me! Oh, I'm so wicked; and oh," as she saw more light far down through the window, "it is the North Church—it is, it is—and Mamma and Milly are in it and are all burning up now! I have done it—I have done it!"

She felt that to endure the torture of her guilty con-

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science one moment longer would suffocate her. Out of bed she sprang, her fair hair flying, her little feet bare, and only her nightgown to protect her from the bitter cold. She went to the verandah; no one saw her, no one heard her; all were tense in watching that lurid flame between the evergreens heavy with snow. It was a gorgeous sight, and Frankie, never much awed, felt its beauty. The cold winter sky, the few still stars, the snow softening all distances, and this one red gleam. The bells rang with more and more terror in them as the winter hush was cut by their sudden clang. Susie shook as she stood there.

"O, Mrs. Gannett, I can't help being afraid," said Bettina, shivering. "I do hate fires so. And it is the North Church, I know it is. The lecture had pictures, and those picture-machines do make halls and churches catch on fire. Oh! If Jim were here—or Patrick—if some man could run down and come right back to tell us if it isn't the North Church!"

"Jim has gone down for Mrs. Faxon, and Patrick is out for the evening. Sure, Bettina, it's sick you'll be if you take on so. Go back to the library and read your book or play your fiddle. You'll take your deaths—all of you. Go in, Frankie, there's a good child."

"I won't go in 'till Bettina does," said Frankie. "I

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love to see how high the next flame goes, and oh! it is so beautiful through the trees, and all the snow looks pink."

"I should think you'd be wondering how Mamma and Milly are ever going to push through the crowd, and how they can find Jim, or beat their way through with all the firemen and hose, and the ropes to step over. And then, in such crowds their pocketbooks may be stolen, or their watches, or someone may step on Mamma and hurt her feet, and you call it pretty! I think you're heartless and horrid and I wish Mrs. Gannett would make you go to bed!"

"Oh, musha, Bettina! You'll get us all scared to death with your robbers and your ropes and all that. Who knows but it's some other place and not where the lecture is at all at all!"

A dry sob as of a soul in great distress broke in between the clanging of the bells. Every one turned and there was Susie! She seemed shrivelled into a substance the size of a doll. She was shivering so that her teeth chattered. Her eyes were staring as if in a trance.

"The child's asleep," said Mrs. Gannett softly. Susie had often tried to walk in her sleep, and that was why her nurse always sat in the room behind the screen

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and under the shaded lamp. "Don't wake her! I'll carry her back to bed." And Mrs. Gannett's arms were stretched out when the atom in white gasped, "Don't touch me—I did it—I'm wicked; God has burnt them up to punish me! O Mamma, I love you so! O Milly, how could I break my word!"

The fire was forgotten as the four listened to these broken panted words. Mrs. Gannett held the child in her arms and led the way into the warm house. Down by the hearth she sat, Birdget kneeling to rub the icy feet. Frankie pressed forward, spied the birdcage and was just going to say, "Oh, I know; she's eaten her birdcage!" when the door bell rang, feet were stamped in the storm doorway to get the snow off, Bridget was at the door with Bettina, and before Mrs. Gannett could understand Susie had slipped from her lap and had staggered down the long hall.

She flung herself into her mother's arms and against the cold fur buried her face.

"Darling, precious, what is it?" quetsioned Mrs. Faxon.

"Oh, I thought you were all burned up, and Milly, too. I know I'm wicked. I did eat the cage. I did lick the pallot when I knew it was wrong. It didn't make me sick, but I thought God burned you and Milly up

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'cause I was too naughty to have you—when I broke my promise and you both love me so!”

Merciful tears came, and as Mrs. Faxon sank with her burden into the nearest hall chair, Milly knelt at her feet patting and kissing her little sister. In really a few moments, though it seemed dramatically an hour, Mrs. Gannett carried Susie to the big fire, where wrapper and slippers waited warm and cosy. Bridget had run off to make hot cocoa, saying to herself, “The poor darling! How she did take on!” And Mrs. Gannett murmured, “And to think of God Almighty punishing the likes of her! And what would He do to the rest of us, indeed!”

Susie’s little hand resting across her mother’s shoulder was so near the fire that the pallor, rigid out in the cold, was now warm, and the gorgeous crimson tints melted into the green and gold of the cage. Even while sipping her cocoa very slowly Susie still clutched her treasure, and every now and then the cheeks of Milly and Mamma were touched with the melting bird. Susie had to stop every few moments to kiss each one and to hug them so hard to be sure they were not all burnt up. In reality the fire was next door to the lecture room, but as it was a store full of paints and varnishes it blazed up very quickly and the damage to the church

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was great. The lecturer had wisely dismissed the audience. No robbers had waylaid Mrs. Faxon, but Jim was not to be found; the fascination of fires to him had made a search for the "madam" neither attractive nor possible.

Susie's sleep was very broken, and deep sighs came from her lips all through the night. She slept late in the morning, and as the sun streamed through that same little corner of the window it shone upon the pallot, almost beyond recognition in her little hand. Bettina said, "How could you let her hold that sticky thing all night, Mamma?" But Milly understood.

That very day Mrs. Faxon wrote to her friend in New York how much joy and grief the candy parrot had caused, and asked her to search in the best toy shops for a metal parrot as beautiful as the candy one, and in a gilded cage, and to send it at once to Susie.

In the afternoon of a long day of gray sky and slowly-falling snow, Susie sat holding her doll Milly by the fire. She had a cold from the exposure in spite of all the precautions that were taken, but she was dressed and sitting in her little rocking chair, the picture of maternity. Milly burst into the room, crying, "Susie, darling; see what Mamma has sent for! And I'm to have the fun of giving it to you."

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The package was undone in silent joy, and the ecstatic "O Milly! O Mamma!" that burst forth when the sweetest new pallot in the goldest of cages appeared in the last tissue paper would have paid Mrs. Faxon many times for all the trouble she had taken. It was a perfect beauty. "Oh!" Susie cried. "The dolls will always have it now, for summer can't melt it, and no one can eat it, and whenever I see it I'll think of how God didn't let you be burnt up to punish me. And oh, Milly, I will keep my word the next time; you know I will, don't you!"

Frankie said to Bridget, "I don't see why she has a present for disobeying Mamma. They wouldn't give me anything if I had done it!"

Bridget laughed. "It's poor the madam would be if she sent to New York for presents every time you disobeyed." And Mrs. Gannett added, "My lamb nearly broke her heart, that she did, and broken things have to be mended."

II

MR. HALIFAX

NO ONE ever knew where the idea of Mr. Halifax originated, but to Susie he was a very real and a most important person. She was four years old at this time, and for that reason, she admitted, she was willing to bear the separation from her husband, Mr. Halifax, and her "hundred children." When Susie began to talk about the Halifaxes Mrs. Faxon said: "Now if you pretend to be Mrs. Halifax, darling, what shall I pretend?" This game of "pretend" was great fun to all the Faxon children, whose dreams were often more precious than realities.

"Oh, this isn't pretend; this is real! I love the Halifaxes so! But it's the baby in long clothes, with her head on the nurse's shoulder, I love most!"

Mrs. Faxon ceased argument, thinking, "This is a passing fancy," but weeks and months went by and still Mr. Halifax was on Susie's lips constantly until, finally, even Frankie half believed in him, and old pupils and students at Yale would keep up by question and answer the belief in the Halifaxes.

Poor little Susie had a distressing winter, for, while

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“walking on her hands” (as she called it) on the parallel bars in the gymnasium she had fallen. Her fond father was telling a friend how athletic his little girls were; that no boys could be stronger in nerve and muscle; that they had done all this since babyhood and had never had an accident. Even as he spoke Susie’s sudden screams pierced the air. The tendons of her arm and shoulder were badly hurt, and for months the pathetic little figure carried her arm in a sling. One day she was seated in a large chair by the window, crying hard. Milly was practicing her scales, and was soon kneeling before her small sister. “What is it, Susie darling; is your arm worse?”

“Oh, no! But I ’spect the twins, Charlie and Willie, to-day, and my darling baby and I can’t hug them with one arm! Oh, dear! And Mr. Halifax doesn’t know about my hurt arm, or he would come.”

The child’s grief seemed so real that Milly could not resist the impulse to offer any comfort in any possible way, so she suggested in quick sympathy: “I know what I can do, darling! I’ll write Mr. Halifax all about it.”

“Oh, thank you, dearest Milly. He’s in New York, you know, and then you can ask Mr. Carter, when he goes back to New Haven, to tell the nurse not to bring

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the baby or the twins 'till I can hug them."

After this there was no withdrawing from the mesh of deception in which the Halifaxes lived and moved and had their being, so every member of the family helped to clothe them with flesh and blood.

Alice Hill was Milly's dear friend, and when her sister Sadie, who was of Frankie's age, would beg to go down to the Old Stone House, her little brother Winthrop would beg to be taken, too. Winthrop was very fond of Susie. He appeared one day in his joy at seeing Susie after so long an absence, he gave her an enthusiastic hug. He did not realize how tender her arm was, nor the even more tender state of her feelings after a winter of great consideration from every member of the household. Her lips turned white from pain. To have any one forget her arm for a moment was incredible. She burst into a passion of tears, crying, "I shall always hate you, you cruel boy; I'd never marry you if there wasn't a Mr. Halifax; never!"

Winthrop had not heard of this rival. "Oh, Susie," he implored, "I didn't mean to hurt your arm. I'll give you every toy I have, and you know you said you'd farm it with me—you love chickens and calves—you—"

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“Go away! I should throw you out of the caddige on the way to the church. I don’t like you. You hurt my arm, and the twins would never do that.”

Susie was naughty and fled to the nursery, hoping to find Mrs. Gannett’s unfailing sympathy, but alas! Bettina was there and in a questioning and teasing mood. First she made Susie tell her why she was in tears; then she began to ask about her wedding with Mr. Halifax. “Were you married in the church, Susie, or in the house?”

“I was in the church and Mr. Halifax was in the house!”

“How lovely! And where did you go on your wedding journey?”

“Oh, he went to Oorope and I went to Asford.” The latter was a tiny village where Susie had driven in the autumn with her Papa.

“Did you go on the train or on the boat, Susie?”

“I went on the boat and he went on the choo-choo.”

How Bettina laughed—until Susie was again in temper. Then her sister diverted her by asking her to read. Susie had one school book, a torn, crayoned, painted, pencilled possession. She pretended to read and her nurse adored every line of this reading. She began slowly:

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"This—is—a—bun."

"This—is—Ann."

"This—is—Ann—and—a—bun."

"May—Ann—have—the—bun?"

At this point Bettina broke in, shrieking with laughter between the words:

"No—but—she—may—smell—of—it!"

Fortunately, Mrs. Gannett came in just as Susie's cries drowned Bettina's mirth, and after a little comforting of one and rebuking of the other, she succeeded in restoring peace.

When Lee Carter or Allen King came on the evening train from New Haven—they came often to spend Sunday with the Faxons—Susie would beg to sit up so that she could ask news of the precious children. Perched on Mr. Carter's knee she would begin: "Now tell me all about them. You saw Charlie?"

"Yes."

"He was dressed in his blue velvet suit, I hope?"

"Yes."

"Were his eyes blue?"

"I think they must have been."

"And a little boy to just match him by his side?"

"Of course."

"They were not quarrelling?"

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"How could twins quarrel?"

"They didn't stand too near the choo-choo cars?"

"No, indeed!"

"Willie was in blue velvet?"

"Yes."

"Was his lace collar very clean?"

"I think so."

"Had the nurse forgotten the white silk neckties?"

"She never forgets."

"His eyes were still brown?"

"They never change."

"But not his hair; that must always be yellow; he gets it from me, you know. I hate dark hair! The nurse can have it, but not the Halifaxes!"

A sigh of content would follow each answer.

"Now the baby—she wasn't sick?"

"I think not."

"She laughed, I hope, when you spoke to her. The next time tell the nurse I say you may hold her; I want to know if she is growing heavy. She had blue bows all over her darling little cap, I hope?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"The nurse's apron was very long?"

"Yes."

"And very white?"

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"Of course it was."

"And I hope she sent her 'spects to me?"

"The nurse is always well-mannered, Susie."

"Oh, I'm so glad! Now I can wait 'till you come up next Friday. Papa will be back from New York and then I'll hear all about Mr. Halifax."

This went on and on. There seemed to be limitless interest for Susie in these questions, and the short, emphatic answers. Every story the child heard, every gift she received, every cent of money she could save, was sure to be woven into a Halifax plan and story. Mrs. Faxon did not approve of encouraging Susie in her delusion, but she felt helpless when she sought for a method of stopping it. She recalled an incident that occurred when she was visiting her brother, Rev. Wilton Faxon. His little boy Tom was four years old, and full of imagination, though entirely truthful about facts. One day before dinner was over he jumped down from his high chair and ran to the front door before his mother realized what he was about.

"You have not been excused, Tom!"

"Oh, no!" Tom lisped, "but if I thop my horth will run away; he ithn't hitched."

Out the little feet pattered.

"This will never do!" said the clergyman father, anx-

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iously. "I must make this only son of mine truthful. Tom, my boy, come into the study. You cannot go out until you take back all those untrue words you have said." Inside the sanctum little chubby Tom stood between his father's knees, and the minister began: "Repeat after father, 'There is no horse at the steps; there is no carriage.'"

Tom meekly repeated the words, and then added eagerly, "Oh, let me go now; do, father! The reinth are fallen under the hortheth feet. I mutht hurry!"

"Tom, there are no reins. Say it!"

"Theee are no reinth!" Here his father slapped the little fat hands with the ruler, and between the raps the lisping baby tongue would repeat the denial. At last the father said: "Now tomorrow, my dear little son, you must remember that the first duty in life is to speak the truth."

"Yeth, thir. And now am I frue my whipping? 'Cauthe therth two black hortheth now, and the reinth are on the ground and therth a double caddige and they'll all run away if I don't hurry."

With a sudden kiss and hug he was off.

"What can I do?" sighed the distressed clergyman. His bright little wife replied: "Learn to distinguish between deceit and imagination."

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Mrs. Faxon stood by Aunt Lucile in the hall when this was said, and she never forgot the wisdom of those words.

Susie's father thought that time was the best disillusionizer, and when he came home on Friday he was always ready for the questions of the tiniest one. How bright the house looked as Patrick drove him to the front gate! As he reached the door, all the four daughters rushed to greet him. Susie was held high on his shoulder; Frankie hugged one knee; Bettina took one hand and put her own arm around his waist, while Milly, with both hands clasped over his other arm, pressed her head against his shoulder. Bridget carried in the satchel and parcels, for there were always surprises for the children and delicious bon bons, flowers, or fruit for dear Mamma. Mrs. Faxon waited in state for a quiet talk after the children had been kissed and hugged enough. Susie sat up for this Friday night supper, and although there were thirty-eight Fridays in the school year, none of the joy lessened as the years rolled by when father came home.

Susie would begin before seeing her surprise: "Papa, how is Mr. Halifax?"

"Just as you wish he were, Susie."

"Hope he knows how well the twins and the baby are?"

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"He must, I think."

"I hope all my big children work hard at school; I hope they don't trouble you, Papa, for nearly a hundred is a great deal in one school." Susie never cared for these ninety-seven children very deeply; she seemed to think that they were pupils of Papa's, and that that insured their safety. They were "big children," and the three little ones were the charmers. Why the poor father, Mr. Halifax, lived in New York with the ninety-seven, no one could guess; and why the immaculate nurse had to stay in New Haven with the care of three upon her shoulders, was ever an enigma. When a guest arrived, Susie's one question was, "Does she come from New York or New Haven?" If she did, a fire of questions would be her greeting, which might have been puzzling had she not been forewarned. If the guest did not hail from either of the before-mentioned cities she was of no interest to Susie.

During the weeks this poor child's arm was in a sling every member of the household tried to divert her. Wednesday was gingerbread day, and besides sending up soft dough to bake in the nursery stove, Ann would make the cunningest gingerbread dolls for Susie. The child had little appetite, so her chief interest in the doll

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was in the giving it away. Every piece doled out indicated the amount of her love, or of her disfavor towards each person. "Now here's the head, that for Mamma, 'cause I love her lots; and the foot's for Mr. Halifax, and there's none for the twins, for they hate gingerbread, and the baby would be sick if she had any; and the nurse can make her own. Papa knows how I love him and he can get his bread at the hotel. Now one leg's for Ann, 'cause she made it, and that's 'cause she loves me; and none's for Bridget, 'cause she laughed when I said my buff sack was trimmed with fite; and none's for Bettina, 'cause she and Mr. Carter put me on the roud table and tipped it over until I most fell off, and then tipped it back so I didn't. And one leg's for Patrick, 'cause he found my lost kitten; and one arm's for Milly, 'cause she never hurts my arm; and the other arm's for Frankie, 'cause she's played dolls with me to-day; and the neck's mine, and all the rest is for my precioucest Mrs. Gannett." During this exciting division, all the family sat about, interested always in the reasons for the bequests. Everything in Susie's life, except her Halifaxes, had reasons as a foundation. A sense of simple justice, of the heart and not of the head, governed her life. Towards spring Susie was very eager over the beauty

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of the grounds, and one day she came in breathless haste and whispered to Frankie: "They're coming to-day! You'll see them all! I'm so 'cited!" Her enthusiasm was contagious and Frankie really believed they were coming.

"We must get flowers in all the vases in the guest room. Mr. Halifax comes from New York and meets the others in New Haven. How he will hug the baby! And I can hug them, too, now!"

The sling was off now and the arm was in good condition, and the first question to the doctor was, "When can I hug everybody?" And, indeed, even to the kittens and the dolls, the hugging process had known no bounds.

"You see, the nurse will keep the children in that room, so Mr. Halifax and I can have the bestest guest room. He must have lavender flowers and white; the children like all kinds—even red; I hate red. Now, don't tell, Frankie, for it's all a 'sprise."

"B-b-but who'll meet them?"

"Oh, you and I will slip out and walk down Elm street, and then down Park street 'till we meet the caddige, and then we'll get in and so you'll see them first of all!"

How the morning flew in preparation!

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The children knew the hour of the only afternoon train and slipped off, their dinner almost untasted. As carriage after carriage passed, Susie would say: "The next is the Halifaxes." They waited, it seemed a week to Frankie, and how the eyes of both children gleamed as they peered through the windows of every passing hack.

"I see one more 'way down at Main street, and if they're not in that one they won't come. They've gone to Oorope instead!"

The vehicle approached. It was empty! With a sob, Susie sank upon the grass plot by a little fountain. "Oh, Frankie, to think that Mr. Halifax could go to Oorope and leave me! And the baby won't stay in long clothes! And the twins can't always wear velvet! And I can't hug them now! Oh, dear! Never speak to me of any of them again!"

Frankie wondered how she could ever get Susie to drag her feet home. When the little sisters reached the house Frankie quietly told every one of Susie's bitter disappointment. "It's a shame the way he's treated her, and I hate the very name of Halifax!"

"Musha, Frankie, what nonsense you're talking!" said Bridget. "It's only a dream the child had; there's no such person alive at all."

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“Well, he’s real to her any way, and he can be horrid if he is only a dream. Aren’t people in stories horrid, and they’re not real half the time? But, please, Bridget, promise not to tease her ever about him or the twins or the baby.” And Bridget promised.

Frankie, half believing in the reality, and almost understanding the depth of Susie’s grief, succeeded in keeping all the family from teasing her, so nothing was said to recall the memory of those very uncertain and very disappointing Halifaxes. How strange it was that Susie never mentioned them until she was no longer a little child!

III

DOLLS

MR. FAXON had ordered a carpenter to build a large and attractive doll house for Millicent and Bettina. The little bookcases in it had glass doors, the books real print and pictures, the fireplaces, imitation burning coal; in fact, for those days all the furnishings were splendid. Dolls eight inches high lived in this house, and the children's larger dolls they played with in other ways. Frenchie was the name of an exquisite Paris doll, dressed by a friend of Mrs. Faxon in New York, who sewed daintily and whose taste was beyond reproach. Frenchie was of Parian marble, with kid joints, and her hands and feet were beautifully formed—even the dimples and the nails were life-like. In spite of Frenchie's charms, Fannie, the large "indestructible" doll, was the comfort and joy of Bettina's life. Fannie hailed the return of spring by an entire change in her coloring. Bettina was an artist and she liked colors to be expressive of her feelings and of the season, therefore her doll's hair on the first day of April was painted in some tone of yellow, varying according to the colors left in the

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paint box. Her eyes, too, though always blue for spring and summer, were sometimes French blue and sometimes Prussian. But eyes and hair could not disguise the charm of Fannie's figure, as she was dragged through winter snows and spring mud—always Bettina's idol. In the fall her hair became a dark brown, her eyes exactly matched, and though Bettina disliked brown hair she never changed it till the proper season came. Fannie had several pretty frocks given her, but Bettina left them in the grape vines, on branches of trees, or dropped them down into the real pig pen, or into the guineapig's box. Indeed, one day Fannie herself fell in among the guineapigs, and Bettina's screams could not bring Patrick to the rescue before the doll's precious nose was chewed off. Fannie, nevertheless, was still Fannie and just as dear, for after all, what is a nose?

Sewing was not Bettina's forte. Mrs. Faxon often said: "Dear child, what will you do if you ever have children of your own and a small income?"

"Oh," Bettina answered, "I can make pincushions!"—which was very true—"and I will make all the clothes of pincushions, and one child can wear the pincushion dress while the rest stay in bed 'till their turns come."

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When Bettina did sew she usually lost her needle and would indignantly cry: "Who's taken my needah? I left it carefully on the floor."

Fannie did not have to wait for a dress of pincushions. She was quite content if she could only change what she *called* her dress often enough, as color was the one requisite. When the dressmaker sent home pieces of velvet or pretty silk, left from Mrs. Faxon's gowns, Bettina would plead for just one little "scrap" for her darling Fannie. She would then cut the piece into a round or a square form and, with one pin, would fasten it to the middle of Fannie's back, then, holding her out, gazing on the one bit of bright color, she would feel that the costume was all that the eye of any fond mother could desire.

Millicent's dolls received very different treatment. Their clothes were folded by night, and neither lost nor torn by day. The doll that matched Frenchie was named Rose, and when she came as a birthday gift from that same lady in New York her mother changed the old verses familiar to children according to the contents of the little trunk.

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ROSE

- “I have a dear doll,
 I take care of her clothes;
She has soft, golden curls,
 And her name is Rose.
- “She has a blue parasol
 That will open and close,
And the sweetest little wrapper,
 And her name is Rose.
- “Her little white dress
 Is trimmed with blue bows;
Her hat has flowers in it,
 Since her name is Rose.
- “She has the dearest eyes
 And the sweetest little nose;
Her lips are ruby-red,
 And I call her Rose.
- “Whenever I go out
 My dolly always goes,
And she takes her little handkerchief,
 And her name is Rose.

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“You ask me if I love her?

Oh, what do you suppose?

Such a darling little sweetheart

With the name of Rose!”

This treasured doll and her wardrobe were in good condition on Millicent's marriage-day, and went with her to her new home far away in California. Frankie had great love for her dolls—in spurts, but between times they would have fared badly had it not been for Susie's motherly, or rather auntly, care. Frankie originated the way of playing with dolls. She suggested having sets of dolls that matched each other. One sad, sweet widow, always dressed in black, Susie called “Pauline.” She was a great convenience to young Mrs. Hall, her sister, who had two cunning little children—Nellie and Rallie, Lillie, with Frankie's doll, who matched her, named Marie, both daughters of widows, went to boarding school. Oh, the fun of getting their clothes ready, and deciding where they should be hidden to be sure it wouldn't be too easy to get them out again! And the joy of the letters the mothers received and read over their tea-cups! The post office was a box set at a stone wall next to the hedge, and poor Mrs. Gannett went back and forth in

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all weathers playing postman. Lillie and Marie were homesick at first, and the mothers almost went to bring them home; but they sent them a chocolate cake instead, and the letters became more cheerful. The answers to the boarding school letters were full of good advice and plans for the next vacation. Aunt Paulina and Aunt Augusta asked Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Dale to help at these festivities. Mrs. Hall had a shiny china face, but real hair, which, in those days, was most unusual. The doll Josephine was clothed in a mysterious past. She was brought over from Denmark. Her face was very attractive. Her dress, being that of her native land, was not pleasing to Susie and Frankie. Mrs. Faxon had given the doll to both children—a fatal plan, for what child belongs to two mothers? And when to this duplex ownership was added this order: “Never take her clothes off. She’s a curiosity from Denmark and not to be treated as a common doll,” her doom was sealed.

“I don’t want her,” said Frankie. “You take her, Susie.”

“Can’t she ever go to bed?” asked Susie.

“Yes, darling. Put her nightgown over her Danish dress, and then she will look like the others,” was Mrs. Faxon’s unthinking reply.

DOLLS

Susie loved the sweet expression of her face, and, in spite of Frankie's teasing, and her making all her dolls snub her, Susie named her "Josephine" and played with her when she and Mrs. Gannett were alone in the nursery. Josephine's days of monotony and peace were numbered, for one afternoon Frankie burst into the room with a sudden idea: "Let's bury Josephine; she's china and she can't hurt; you know we're always finding pieces of china in the ground all bright, and they come from China; it's right underneath the ground, China is, so she'll love it. We'll put her in a nice box and lay roses on her grave, and the dolls will come and cry about her. We'll make her stay a year and then dig her up, and she'll be so glad to see every one, and she'll tell grave stories and ghost stories, and not one of the other children's dolls will be anything like her."

Susie, fascinated against her will, yielded. On a lovely spring day Josephine was buried. Susie woke in the night—it had begun to rain—saying, "Mrs. Gannett, what is Josephine thinking of me now? She is wet; I know the rain has soaked in, and down there in the wet and cold and dark it must be awful!"

"Who are you dreaming of now, darling?"

"It's the doll Frankie buried."

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"Oh, a doll that's china doesn't mind. Never you think of her again!"

Susie did think of Josephine often and missed her, too, for her violet-blue eyes, low brow, and straight china hair were not like the other dolls. One day in late autumn the kind friend who had been to Denmark was a guest at the Old Stone House. She asked whether her doll had proved a favorite.

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs. Faxon. "It is so attractive that I forbade its clothing being removed, and the children appreciate its value. I'm sure she's in good condition." Frankie's face turned crimson. She wanted to leave the room. Mrs. Travers noticed her confusion, and thought the child was shy because she was trying to thank her again (Mrs. Faxon had sent the notes of thanks long ago).

"So you are still fond of the Danish dolly! May I see her?"

"Oh! I—I—can't find her now."

"Frances," said Mrs. Faxon, "get the doll at once."

"She can't," said Susie softly, grabbing Frankie's hand.

"Frances, do you hear me?" said her mother sternly.

"I—I—can't get her!" was Frankie's answer.

"Don't you know where she is?"

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"Oh, yes; she does!" cried Susie.

"Is she broken?"

"No—no—she's all safe," said Susie.

"Get the doll, Frances, immediately."

"I can't. I—I—buried her!" said Frankie, hiding her head behind Susie.

"Buried her?" asked Mrs. Faxon. "That expensive doll—almost a curiosity!"

"Well, you see," exclaimed Susie, "you told us we couldn't undress her, and she got tired of being a 'curious' and not like the other dolls, and she had to sleep in her dress any way, so we thought she's like to be buried a year and then be dug up and tell grave stories to the others, and not be really dead at all."

"This is a most astounding departure," said Mrs. Faxon, smiling, though trying to be sober. Mrs. Travers was laughing out loud.

"How long is she to stay, Frances?"

"Oh, only a year, Mrs. Travers; and it was in April, so the time's not up yet."

"Frances, you may get her now if you know where you put her."

"Oh, of course we know that, Mamma," said Susie.

"All the dolls went to the funeral and sang the hymns, and they go every Sunday to put flowers on her grave."

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I'm sure Josephine knows enough stories now, and I have missed her dreadfully. I'm so glad you made Frankie dig her up. I've begged and begged, but she wouldn't do it for me."

Poor Josephine! Her pasteboard box was crumbled, and the Danish costume was far too mildewed to be of further use. Mrs. Travers cut all her curious clothing off and said, "I believe Josephine is perfectly thankful to be like the other dolls, and while I am here I shall make her first a nightdress, and then pretty frocks so that she will feel quite at home in the doll house."

Susie jumped into her lap and kissed her. "Oh, you are so good! And now the next doll I get I'll paint a moustache on it and call it 'Will,' and he'll marry Josephine, for she'll have the nicest clothes, so she's the bride." Frankie now wished she had kept Josephine.

Before Mrs. Travers went away she took both the children down town and, to their amazement and joy, gave a doll to each to put moustaches on for men.

"But Frankie's can't be married, so it's no use to have it a man."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Travers.

"Because Aunt Augusta's too old for him, and Allie's

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mother has a husband in Europe, and Marie is at boarding school—she hasn't on quite long dresses yet, so there isn't any doll Frankie's got that goes with Josephine."

"I see," said Mrs. Travers. "We must get two dolls for Frankie, and then there can be two brides and two grooms and a double wedding."

"Oh, how lovely!" cried the children in one breath.

"Now when the wedding day is fixed you must let me know—write me a letter yourself, I'rances."

"Oh, yes, I will!" was the quick reply.

The children had written letters since Mr. Faxon had removed his school to New York, for it was a household rule that Mrs. Faxon should send with her own daily letter one from each of the children in turn. Before the children could print they said the letters which Mamma or Millicent wrote for them. The next stage was printing. Susie would take a huge page of foolscap paper and, putting it against the window pane, would print the cunningest letters; and every now and then a huge kiss, and little ones from the dolls and the kitten, to send to Papa. Whenever the children received gifts they said their notes of thanks or wrote them with their own hands, and their letters were as natural as their talking.

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It was very exciting getting the men ready, and much more difficult than making the bridal trousseaux. In three weeks the day was set. Lillie and Marie were at home, for it was Thanksgiving vacation. Allie and Nellie were flower girls; Ruie and Rallie were pages. The day before a box arrived from New York and on the outside was written, "Miss Frances Faxon, Miss Susanne Faxon. To be opened on the Twenty-sixth. Keep in a cool place." Milicent was sweet in the praises of the wedding arrangements and, for once, Bettina did not laugh, but played the wedding march on her violin.

Before the ceremony Frankie opened the box, and there was the loveliest doll's wedding cake!

"Oh, how I do love Mrs. Travers!" cried Frankie. "And," Susie added, "when—when we were so horrid to her Danish doll!"

The dolls often pretended to bowl and to have gymnastics and to play croquet. They had arbor parties in the grape vines and visited each other in various trees and summer houses. In summer they tired of the well-furnished doll house,—it belonged to the big children, anyway, and there were many restrictions—so they wound up the walking doll, put baskets on her arm, and sent her to market to buy stores for the summer

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cottage. How clumsy and awkward she was! With her bell-shaped body and her little metal feet showing, what a horrid noise she made as she walked! How provoking it was when she stopped just between the market and the doll house! The summer resort was in a room next to the attic. An English hat tub was the ocean, and the cottage was a large box with furniture made out of blocks and pieces of wood by the children themselves. There were many contrivances for beds, washstands and bureaus, but with all the roughness there was a homelike air in all the rooms. Susie adored it, and, years after, found joy of the same kind and in the same measure in a summer cottage built for her own live children.

"I wonder why," she said one day, "the dolls all seem happier in the cottage than in the big splendid house?" "Oh, I know," said Frankie. "It's because it's their own, and no one says 'Don't' and the things can't spoil, and if they did we'd make some more just like them."

The chub dolls were all china, plump and babyish with no joints and no hair, so they could bathe every day, the older dolls paddled, and the mammas and widows and brides looked on from the beach. One day a dress fell into the ocean, which made the water yellow.

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"We'll dump out this water and get more," said Frankie. "It's only a bare floor." The condition of the plaster of the ceiling below may be imagined.

The next excitement in the town house was the coming of two babies, and oh! the love and joy they brought with them. How many times Allie and Nellie, Ruie and Rallie had to be told to hush, "for Baby's asleep."

Besides these doll-house dolls there was a precious Milly the beloved of Susie; for though Bettina had made all her clothes, the moment she placed her in Susie's arms the happy child exclaimed, "Oh, I'll call her 'Milly!'" Bettina wept real tears, and who could blame her?

There were two very wonderful dolls—the only real baby dolls that Davenport ever possessed. They were the size of a three-months-old-infant, made of wax, with just enough pink in their faces to make them look real. Their eyes closed, and the eyes had lashes. They had a complete outfit, and their tintypes were often mistaken for real babies. Frankie and Susie were permitted only to look at them. After Millicent's marriage she spent a year abroad and gathered her possessions together to take to her new home. This beautiful baby doll was among them. Frankie, in a spirit of mischief,

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took down from the attic the old English leather baby carriage, and into it placed the sleeping doll. Mrs. Faxon was resting; Millicent and Bettina were out rowing with a party of students; Susie watched Frances expectant. In a short while all was ready. Baby in cap, and under veil and blankets, the top of the carriage down, looked just like a sleeping child. Up and down the shady Elm Street Frances slowly walked, now and then speaking softly to Susie. As the hours advanced ladies passed them making calls. "Oh, Frankie, we were just on our way to see your married sister! Shall we find her at home?" asked one.

"No, Mrs. Foster, she is out rowing and Mamma's asleep."

"Who's baby have you, Frances?"

It was not an unusual sight to see Frankie with a baby, for several young professors' wives had little ones, and Frankie often wheeled them up and down until the nurse or the mamma was ready.

"Oh, this is Milly's baby! Isn't she a darling? But don't wake her, for Milly wouldn't like to come home and find her fretty. She'll sleep all the afternoon if I wheel her."

Mrs. Foster looked as if she had been struck.

"Why, Frankie! How old is the baby?"

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"Oh, about three months, I think."

"Then it was born before she sailed from abroad! How hard to take that voyage with so young an infant!" In her heart she said, "Why didn't I hear of this? Mrs. Faxon always tells me everything first. I'll just run over to Mrs. White's to see if she heard of Milly's baby. Strange that Milly didn't mention the baby at the Copes' reception nor at my own dinner!" The afternoon passed, and many were the friends to whom Frankie's answers were full of bewilderment. At last Milly and Bettina and the students came up to the gate. Frankie was just turning in. "Oh!" said Milly, astonished. "Why did you think I'd let you take my precious wax doll when you never did it in all your life before?"

"Well, you'll carry her off soon, and then I'll never even see her. I just wanted to pretend she's a real baby."

"And whose baby, pray?"

"Oh," stammered Frankie, "I told everybody she was yours—just for fun!"

With a look that spoke volumes Milly flew up to her mother to cry real tears of vexation. She was not yet twenty, and had a very childish attitude to life.

That evening Mrs. Foster called to bring a sack for

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the baby (she always had one on hand) and Mrs. Faxon, through her, informed the whole town of Davenport of Frankie's joke, but it took a great deal longer to make them accept the tale of the doll than it did to have them eagerly receive the exciting news of Milly's baby.

IV

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"I THINK you might let me go, Mamma, too," said Frankie with much temper.

"I'm only two years younger than Bettina, and I love to see college things, too! Oh, dear!"

"No, Frankie, I shall not change my mind. The next time I may take you and Susie if you do not tease now."

"Then can't I have Sadie here to play, or do anything I want to?"

"If Mrs. Hill is willing I am always glad to have Sadie come. Jim may drive up in the buggy to get her," Mrs. Faxon answered.

Sadie Hill arrived and the children played all sorts of games in turn.

"I know what we can do now," suggested Frankie.

"Let's see who dares jump from the wall at the highest place."

This brick wall was painted white, and at every terrace there was a square pillar which extended beyond the wall making a fine house or seat. As the wall neared the pillars going down hill the distance to jump

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became greater, and the game was to jump at the lowest place and then to run down to the gate with the iron latch, to scramble up, using the wide iron hinges as a ladder, and run to the next highest place and jump, until one of the company "didn't dare." After a while the children were tired of this, so they tried jumping from the wall below the gate. This wall had on one side the long vegetable gardens, and on the other the roadway, and at the end the pig-pen. Frankie delighted to run on this wall because of the danger of falling into the pig-pen, which was built away down so as to be on a level with the barn cellar, making the wall on that side twice as high as on the garden side. Susie was terribly afraid of that wall; nothing could tempt her to walk on it; and when Frankie was in a teasing mood she would often pretend to fall over to make Susie cry. At other times when she wanted Susie to promise anything, she would threaten to climb away up on the shingles of the barn and come down on the carriage house side, and the timid little sister would immediately say "yes."

To-day Susie sat on the pillar of the gate near the greenhouse and watched the other children jump. Suddenly it was Frankie's turn, and oh! what a lovely crackle she made as she went down! She had jumped

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on a lettuce bed. The glass was off and a straw matting lay over it.

"My!" said Sadie breathing hard as she always did when she was excited, "that's a fine noise, let me try it, too!" And she did. Over and over again the two jumped until all the lettuce was ruined. Patrick had been offered twenty-five dollars for the heads in that bed the day before!

"Oh, I'm tired jumping," said Frankie. "What shall we do?"

"It's raining, any way," said Susie, as a spring shower was beginning to fall. "I know! Let's go into the workshop and see if we can't whittle out some boats to sail the next time we go rowing."

"I have a new idea," burst in Frankie. "Let's make a river of our own—you just wait—I'll show you. We'll start the river first and it will be growing bigger all the time while we are making the boats."

With a spring Frankie reached the watering trough, and by twisting very hard took the end off the hydrant, so that the water ran in a stream down towards the barn.

"Now we'll start on the boats while the river's getting big."

In they went to the workshop. There were two win-

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dows facing the wall; a carpenter's bench; rows of hanging shelves where paint was kept, and racks for tools. The boys of Mr. Faxon's school were permitted to work in here. Swimming boards for the twelve boarding pupils, and extra boards for any day pupils who cared to swim, were kept here. Mr. Faxon made gymnasium work and swimming compulsory.

"Oh, where is the stuff to make boats of?" asked Susie.

"We'll get that later; now let's try the colors and see what to choose for our boats," stammered Frankie, for she stammered when she was excited.

"I'll have red," said Sadie. "Green's mine!" shouted Frankie.

"I want blue dreadfully," moaned Susie, as green and red were brought down, for Frankie had climbed up to get them on the paint shelves and no blue was there.

"Oh, I know! Milly and Bettina have oil paints—it's mean that they always have everything and we have stupid old water colors that wouldn't be good for painting boats, I'll get their oil paints!" Off she flew and came back panting in the rain. "Here they are, and here's enough blue. I'll get all the blues out and we'll put dabs on the swimming boards (they were

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painted white and in perfect condition), and then we'll see if you want to change the shade."

"Just like a pallet!" said Susie.

"Yes, and you add white to make it light, and more paint to make it dark, and oil to make it runny!"

What a sight the swimming boards were!

"Mine is too runny, so I'll try another board," cried Frankie.

They were using the biggest and the longest brushes of Milly's and Bettina's, and dipping them into the oil cups most generously. Suddenly Frankie looked down at her hands and exclaimed, "Gracious! I look as if I had green gloves on my fingers—Oh, I know! Let's all pretend we have kid gloves on! I think it's real mean Milly and Bettina have real ones and I haven't. Well, here goes, green kid gloves for once!" She squeezed the tubes of green until her hands were plastered.

"Go on, Susie, you make blue ones."

"No, I won't. I hate the way it feels, and if I wanted to rub my eyes I'd get paint in them, and I couldn't hold the cat, and I don't think Milly would like to have her paints squeezed out."

"You're a silly, isn't she, Sadie? She never will have fun. I have an idea: I'll have elbow gloves, 'way up—

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but the green's all gone—I know, I'll plaster this lovely cherry all over and it will be perfectly beautiful! You try another color, too, Sadie."

The little guest had already used up the available red so the orange was her next choice. At last the gloves reached the elbow.

"I'll tell you what's a lovely plan," said Frankie. "We must have buttons! Now what kind? I know! Milly's agates. Susie'll get them. You know Mr. Stewart gave them to her. They are in a round thing on the lowest shelf of the cabinet in the living room. Hurry up, Susie! It's not raining a bit now."

"Yes it is," said Susie. "It's raining a lot and my dress has dabs of paint on it, and I don't want to be scolded first."

"Well, all right for you! If you can't get marbles for me when I do such lots of things for you, Sadie and I'll just leave you out of our club, so there! Next winter I won't steer you down when it's icy and you're afraid to steer yourself, and I won't divide the cake left from tea any more in the morning!"

Sadie began to cry. "Milly will hate to have her marbles get paint on them. They're very 'sensitive ones and not just glass like ours."

"What's paint? It comes off with oil, and we'll have

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the marbles any way, only you'll lose a lot if you don't get them."

Susie, still tearful, went off and came back breathless with the marbles in a box.

"Here they are, but I think you are mean to make me get them for you!" The marbles were divided evenly and the elbow gloves were a glory to behold. Suddenly a bell was heard; it was a bell Mrs. Faxon rang when she wanted Patrick in emergency. Patrick and Jim were "redding out the cellar" as Patrick called it. He quickly answered the bell. "You rang, Ma'am?"

"Oh, Patrick, see all that water! Where does it come from?"

"Begorrah it's a flood! It's filling the pig-pen and the little pigs there and all!" He was off in a flash and at once discovered where the trouble lay. He could not screw the hydrant top on without a wrench and, going into the carpenter shop to get one, he laughed at the sight that met his eyes.

"Susie, you must go and call your mother right down here to see these mischievous children. I must stop the water. Get Mrs. Gannett, too, for it's a holy mess if ever there was one."

"Oh, where are our boats?" wailed Susie. "He's going to stop the river!"

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The boats were entirely forgotten, and the indignation of mother and sisters over paint, marbles and lettuce the gentle reader may imagine. Frankie soon forgot her punishment, but Susie always felt that she had been a traitor to get Milly's marbles for such a desecration.

Frankie's goodness did not last for more than three weeks. Her next piece of mischief concerned a pair of new shoes, and this is the conversation that began it: "I love my new shoes, don't you Frankie?" said Susie, looking down at her black kid boots.

"No, I just hate mine. I begged for bronze like Bettina's, and of course I never get anything I want. I know what I'll do, though; I'll make them bronze."

"How can you?" asked Susie.

"You come down to the hydrant and I'll make yours bronze, too."

In a few moments Frankie had mixed mud and water together until it was a delicious brown, and then plastered all over her own and Susie's shoes.

"Oh, my feet feel all wet, and it's coming through the buttons, and I hate bronze shoes!" said Susie, half crying. Alas! It was too late. As the new shoes dried in the sun the result was pitiful.

"Take them off, then, and get Patrick to black them

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over, and don't be a little tattle-tale this time, and I'll show you fine tricks on the rings in the gymnasium." The children were swinging from one ring to another and Susie was very happy until, stretching down from a ladder, she burst a blister on her hand. She had no courage in bearing pain; partly because all the serious accidents of the family had fallen to her lot and she knew how terrible pain could be.

"Oh, this broken blister!" Susie cried, wringing her hands.

"Never mind, I'll cure it!" and Frankie was off in a minute and returned with salt in her hand. "Now I'll cure it." She rubbed the salt in vigorously, and oh! the smart. Susie screamed.

"How could you! I think you're so mean! I'll never believe you again, you horrid sister, to make my blister worse!" In her stocking feet she ran shrieking all the way up to the house. Mrs. Gannett was out on the terrace to meet her. "My poor darling!" she said, when she heard the tale of woe, "Hush, my Pet, I'll dress you up fresh and take you down to the baker's, and get you a cream puff, and then we'll see the convent and the priest's house and go over to Portville in the ferry boat."

Susie smiled through her tears. This was one of her

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"favoritest" treats. The priest was a friend of Mr. Faxon and always gave the children a warm welcome. This afternoon he held Susie on his knee, and gave her a little religious card, carefully choosing one without a Roman Catholic sentiment upon it. This card had an engraved picture and delicate paper lace around the edge. It showed the child Jesus holding a cross of gold as He leaned against a cradle; about His sacred feet were wooden crosses, and under was written: "Toute croix qui la touche devient or."

Father McNeil told Susie the meaning of the words and picture and, after asking Mrs. Gannett if Jim was doing well, he led them through the priest's garden to the convent gate. Oh, the charm of that quiet spot! Once inside that high, vine-covered wall! The nuns' faces seemed always so fresh, with cheeks of soft pink and foreheads white and smooth. Susie always hoped to have dolls enough to spare one to be a nun, but she hated to take Lillie from boarding school, and there was no other available doll since Josephine was married.

The sisters knew Mrs. Gannett's sad history, and were always very kind to her, and much interested in the Faxon children. They often gave Susie little cards, but to-day the Mother Superior took her through the

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garden. Susie always loved to see the shrines and unexpected places, the lilies and roses in summertime were luxuriant in their growth, but this day in the early spring only a few hyacinths peeped out of the ground. One of these the reverend Mother picked and put into the child's hand. "Oh, violet is what I love, and I thank you so much. I'll put it in the Virgin's vase for Mrs. Gannett." Susie always whispered whenever she spoke to the priest or to the sisters.

Mrs. Gannett then took her into the reception room where she wished to see one of the nuns. Goodbyes were said and Mrs. Gannett and her little charge walked slowly down the hill towards the river.

How much poetry there always was for this child about a river! She could imagine the "chieftain to the Highland bound" standing by this "stormy water" (though she had never seen it stormy). She could almost see the father dash down on his steed towards the wave that engulfed his child. She also fancied the graceful form of Elaine drifting down by the soft green willows, and, wherever the river turned, she could see the prow of the boat curving gently around. At one bend the hills behind made the water seem like a lake. This was a scene for Scott's poetry and romances to her. How sorry she felt for children who

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could not look at hills and water from their houses. How could any scene have any beauty or change without a river to freeze or swell, or get rough, or become smooth?

The distance over to Portville was less than a mile, but how long it seemed and how beautiful! The reflections of the tender green of the banks, and the long stretches of sand on the Portville side; the dark stone quarries from which all New York was built, Frankie said; the little spires in the villages nestling at the turns of the river, or where high hills met; the tiny island where Frankie and she had planned to build a house to live in all summer, were all objects of as much charm and glory as scenery in the Alps would be later on to this poetic child.

Often they stayed over a boat or two at Portville, passing the time at the house of an old-fashioned Irish woman who had befriended Mrs. Gannett long ago. The little dish of tea she gave to Susie seemed to her to have been brewed by the gods, and almost as delicious as the cream puff at the baker's. Now the slanting rays across the fields told Mrs. Gannett they had just time to catch the five-o'clock ferry to Davenport. How soft the air was coming home! How small the row boats looked as they waited to take the waves of

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the ferry! Would the people row too near and be drowned—as so many were who did not know how to manage a boat? No, these people were safe now, and laughing as the boat rose on the long swell of the wave. The leisurely walk home was full of joy. Each beautifully-kept place they passed seemed bathed in glory as the sun touched every budding plant and velvet lawn and tree. How the windows glimmered red of the Poor House, away off beyond two ridges of hills! How many windows it had! Why was it so sad a place? Mrs. Gannett nearly cried every time she said the old lines “Over the hills to the Poor House I’m wending my weary way.”

At last they had come to their own grounds and there was Allen King on the steps with Millicent, and Bettina just tuning her violin in the living room. Frankie was playing with Muff, and looking as if she had never teased anything in her life—not even a kitten. Susie looked at her hands; they did not smart now, so she would forgive Frankie and play one game of croquet with her before supper.

V

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"I KNOW something that you don't know!" sang Frankie in a sing-song, teasing way, so natural to her, and so sure to stir up Susie's usually tranquil spirit.

"I think you're mean not to tell me!" pouted Susie.

They were sitting on the lower verandah, before a wide table, on which lay all varieties of colored papers: soft tissue in bewildering shades of blue, pink, violet, green and yellow; thick paper with a gloss, which made the most effective satin gowns; dull paper for broadcloth or velvet suits; bits of lace; and odds and ends of ribbon. The fortunate paper dolls, for whose apparel these materials were collected, lay in large, flat books, where their names at the tops of the pages, made finding their whereabouts possible. They were christened rather fancifully. The name "Gwendolen" was now a bone of contention, for "Daniel Deronda" was the novel being read aloud by the older members of the family, and the heroine's name was on the lips of every one. Frankie had insisted that *her* doll should be called Gwendolen, and had offered all

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the names in the last book they had heard discussed, which happened to be the "Mill on the Floss," if Susie would give up Gwendolen.

"You know I hate all those names," was Susie's answer. "Maggie's a maid's name, and Lucy's a colored name, and Stephen's horrid, and Philip's the only pretty one, and that's a china doll of mine, so I don't want it. The only one that's nice is Floss, and that's a river, Milly says."

"Well, then, I'll give you all the names we got from 'Little Men,' and you know you love Jo and Laurence, so you see I am generous." Susie accepted her fate and rechristened two dolls at once.

The ladies who had husbands, as man-dolls were very hard to get, usually were mothers of large families, and each of the children had one page for her dwelling and one for each of her many frocks.

"It is perhaps the way our homes will be arranged in the future, a small sleeping apartment and many closets," was a remark made laughingly by a guest who was looking at the quite wonderful products of paper dolls. Susie just now was sewing bits of velvet in bows at the top of a lace flounce, and the difficulty of the work made her rather snappy.

"I think we might have fun out here this lovely morn-

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ing, without your beginning the first thing to tease me; you know if you say I can't it just makes me want to, and if you keep still about your old secrets I wouldn't care if you had millions and millions of them!"

Susie did not realize that the possession of a secret is worthless until some one else suspects your ownership, and, by trying to find out the secret, creates its value. "If you'll be brave and not make a fuss over every tiny blister on your hands, I'll tell you." Susie promised. "A new little girl is coming to Davenport, and guess for how long."

"Oh, I can't guess, I'll prick my fingers if I do—a day?"

"How silly! Two whole weeks, and her mother's coming and her father isn't and her aunt lives here, and her grandmother, and her grandfather does, too. They all came over here last night and told Mamma, for I heard them."

"I wish I could stay awake like that and always hear everything; how do you do it, Frankie?"

"I just wake up and want some water and say the drink Mrs. Gannett gives me isn't cold, and while she goes 'way down the winding stairs to get more, I run down the straight stairs. I sit and listen to the voices in the library. I heard hardly any of it but just this

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last night: 'It will be only two weeks, Mrs. Faxon, but we do want our precious Celia to be very happy for that time, and as she has been so carefully reared, there are no children but yours suitable to be her companions.' Just then Mrs. Gannett was at the parlor landing, so I flew up fast to be in bed when she came, and how I tore my toenail on the brass rod of the stairs!"

"That's because you disobeyed; I'm always hurt if I do, and I keep telling you it doesn't pay."

"Oh, well, the nail's all right now, so I guess it did pay this time, for I know a secret that Bettina thinks I don't, and I just love to know things before she does, and I'm so crazy to see this Celia!"

"Celia what?"

"Oh, how do I know? I just know her grandmother's name, and you don't know that. You've got to guess and guess before I tell you."

"Celia Hall? Old Mrs. Hall must be her grandmother," ventured Susie.

"No, you're wrong and you're cold, too; not even on the right street; try again." Poor Susie was always so deeply interested in her dolls that she hated to take her mind off to guess, but to withstand Frankie's wishes, brought such losses swift and sure, that she generally

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bent to the stronger will. To her, future suffering was more than she could bear. At last, after guessing names of all the professors in the college and divinity school, she named the spinsters in the neighborhood, much to Frankie's disgust.

"People who are 'Miss' are never grandmothers, so don't waste time on Miss anybody."

"Oh, I know, Mrs. White! I didn't say her because I know Miss Sybil sings, but hasn't a baby and couldn't visit her 'cause she lives here."

"But it's her sister's, Mrs. Warfield's child, and it isn't a baby, goosey, or how could it play with us? Now you know, and she's coming to-day, so this is the last time for fourteen whole days that I'll make paper dolls' dresses with you."

"I think you might do it just once! How I hate strange little girls to come; you always like them better than you do me, and leave me alone; I never want anyone but you and Mrs. Gannett."

"That's because you have no spirit of adventure. Don't you know that three can play games that two can't? We'll get Sadie Hill down here, that's four, and we'll have a circus, and we'll do all sorts of tree games; you'll love all the things I'll plan. If it rains many days I will make these dolls' dresses with Celia."

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"No," objected Susie, "I don't want her to do it; this is just yours and my fun; it would be horrid to have her see how we sew and paste to get these wonderful dresses so beautiful."

At this moment voices were heard in the hall; the heavy oak door was opened, and Mrs. White, Miss Sybil, Mrs. Warfield, and the illustrious Celia appeared. Miss Sybil, whose bright smile, and deep love for children, had made her a favorite with the younger Faxon children particularly, came eagerly forward; kissing both children, she held Susie's hand and said: "Celia, darling, this is my dear little neighbor you have heard so much about, she is two years younger than you, but as her sister is one year older, I'm sure you three can play together nicely. Frankie, this is my little niece, and for two weeks I count on you to make her love Davenport so dearly that we shall often persuade her papa to lend her to us. Mary" (she turned to Celia's mother), "could any place in the world be so perfect for children? Just see the verandah! We think ours wide, but this is a hundred feet in length and twelve feet broad, and half the length is shaded by the roof. See all the benches and tables for work; Milly sews and paints out here, Bettina plays her violin, and often the Faxons have breakfast and tea in

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summer weather. Now look at the view! The winding river and the soft blue hills; and below the green turf of the paths and terraces; and these huge ever-greens framing it all; there are fifty on the place."

"Do the children ever fall off the verandah?" Mrs. Warfield asked as she leaned on the high balustrade. "How could they when it is as wide and solid as if made for a Roman wall? The gate, you see, is kept fastened, that leads to the long flight of steps down to the stone terrace, and the banisters are on both sides, so there is no excuse for falling. Isn't it all lovely, Celia?" Aunt Sybil kissed her and patted the elaborately curled black hair.

"But this is stone, though, just like New York," drawled the child, "Where's the grass?"

"Celia, just look at the gardens, and the summer houses and 'way down the drive beyond the greenhouse, the barn. It isn't a barn really, for there is a gymnasium, bowling alley, and above a dove cote. These little girls have everything to make them happy, and indeed they are as happy as birds; they look like birds, too, in the orchard trees. That's the orchard off on the right, you remember passing that long hedge, don't you? Oh, the fun these children have! In the spring they pick violets, swing in the hammocks, and

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play croquet, and in the summer they climb the trees and pick the fruit which they eat while they are reading. They coast between all these rows of trees in winter on the crust. I love to watch them. And, Celia, what do you think they wear in winter? Red riding-hoods and capes. One day Bettina sent Allen King to find her blue red riding-hood, as she was cold. He was gone for ages, and at last came out in despair, saying: 'I can't see anything that looks like a blue red riding-hood; do you mean purple?'" Here Frankie broke in: "He is such a stupid!"

Bridget now appeared with election cake and currant wine.

"May Celia have just a wee sliver of this cake, and this small glass of our home-made wine?" asked Mrs. Faxon, looking at Mrs. Warfield.

"Is it safe, Mother?" she said, looking at Mrs. White.

"I can't decide. Ask Sybil," Mrs. White replied. Sybil laughed. "I never brought up children, but I should say that whatever Susie and Frankie eat and drink and play must be right; look at their eyes and cheeks." And indeed the soft pink bloom and bright eyes were a safe augury as to the children's diet and daily life. "But I never take cake unless it's chocolate, or a very big piece," drawled Celia.

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"Oh, my precious; how ridiculous! You will take what the other children do," answered her sweet mamma.

"No, I don't want any, I tell you. I hate cake that isn't chocolate!"

"Then you run down to see the gardens while we enjoy ours," Aunt Sybil suggested quickly.

"Let's take our cake to the doll house," said Susie, "or let's get the dolls' dishes and have a picnic in a summer house."

"No," said Celia, "that's too much trouble. I want to stay with Aunt Sybil and do what she does."

When the cake was passed, Mrs. Warfield broke her piece in two, and quickly slid the frosted half upon Celia's plate. The child who had refused the children's thin slice, swallowed this frosted end greedily, exclaiming: "Why, it's as good as chocolate; it really is. I'll take my own piece after all!" Miss Sybil blushed as Bridget passed the small plate again. Frankie and Susie nudged each other and began to show Celia their paper dolls so that they would not giggle out loud.

"Oh, I like big paper dolls. I have the large kind you buy in New York with dresses all made."

"And I hate those big clumsy ones; they aren't like real people," said Frankie. "These are engraved ones,

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with such soft pink skins, they look like Bettina's doll Frenchie, and we prize them because they came out of Peterson's Magazine Mamma had before she was married."

"And then we have the fun of copying new fashions out of paper ourselves," beamed Susie.

"Oh I hate paste—it's so sticky and gets in my nails!"

"Of course it's sticky or it wouldn't stick," laughed Frankie. "Do you hate to sew with needles because they have points?"

"Oh, I shan't ever sew; I embroider."

"Then there's no use talking about paper dolls; that's one thing less to do," Susie said with a relieved sigh. Aunt Sybil now rose to say goodbye, promising to let Celia come over to play all that afternoon and stay to tea.

When alone with Frankie Susie said: "I think she's horrid; she doesn't like one thing and she never will. She can't play any games with those silly long polished nails of hers. I don't think much of your wonderful secret." All this was in Frankie's heart, but she had a large nature and loved most of the world. She had no discernment of character but a great deal of charity.

"Well, she's lived in New York in hotels in winter,

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and boarded in summer, too, and changed her clothes all the time; she can't help not knowing how to play." "Well, I don't like her a scrap and I never will!"

At three o'clock Celia appeared, her blue parasol and white lace hat, her blue kid slippers and sash, taking up so much of her attention that she could scarcely greet the children. Frankie and Susie were always dressed in white late in the afternoon, but their play was so rough in orchard and barn and summer houses that when dressed in white they were often punished for the rents and stains caused by their play. Now they had a choice: white dresses, which meant a walk with Mrs. Gannett, croquet, or quiet play; or colored frocks, which admitted paste galore, trees, gymnasium and all the fun they could crowd into the hours between dinner and five o'clock. Mrs. Faxon often said, "Teach children to choose and to abide cheerfully by their choices; this will be a great help in after years." Indeed it proved to be to these four Faxon children. Susie looked very cunning in a blue print dress, with white braid trimming, her short hair held back by a round comb, and her feet in broad-toed shoes of sense and comfort. Frankie's frock was pink of similar style. Celia looked at them from toe to head. Shoes

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were her passion and she always looked at them first. "Oh, I thought this was after lunch, but you're not dressed yet."

"Indeed we're not dressed. If we were we could not have a speck of fun. We dress for tea at five, and now, hurrah! There are two hours for all sorts of games! I say barn; one to begin, two to show, three to make ready, and four away I go!" And with that Frankie gave a spring down the front granite steps, over the wall with a bound, down through the shaded yard by the laundry, through the side gate, down the driveway and into the barn like a deer. Susie was after her in a flash for she was fleet and fearless. As she panted into the bowling alley she looked back to see Celia picking her way daintily down the walk, crossing on the flagging which went from the terrace gate to the well and on down to the barn, still with a mincing step, touching the stone walk only. Frankie had never seen a child of this unfortunate type in her life, and watched her very much as she would watch a trained circus animal. Susie spoke first: "This is our bowling alley that we love so. Can you bowl? We have to take turns setting up the pins, for Jim Gannett is too busy to do it for us. Of course when Milly and Bettina have bowling parties he sets up the pins for them, but I

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think the setting up the pins is half the fun, any way. And then jumping so fast when the balls begin to come at you."

"I don't know what you mean by 'pins'" said Celia. Frankie was up at the other end in a moment, setting up the pins and rolling the balls back on the long track. Celia was looking at the black board.

"It's like school to have black boards."

"Oh, no!" explained Susie. "These boards are for keeping tally. I know how to keep tally. Wasn't this a funny joke: one of my father's big boys always told such ridiculous stories—fibs, I mean—and he couldn't help it; it was in his family, you know, and he painted in black for his tally: 'Mark Marquand, 310.' The joke is that if you get all the strikes and all spares every turn you have you can't get over 300, so all the boys knew it wasn't true and how they teased him! Whenever they saw him they'd call out: 'How about 310, Mark?' Now the pins are up. Will you begin? You better not try the big ball—it's too heavy. I do it with both hands, and I love it for if it does go straight it often gives me a strike." Susie was in her element and full of eagerness.

"If you can take the biggest ball, I can, for I'm two years older than you," Celia snapped, as she lifted the

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heaviest ball. Alas! It rolled over, pinching her fingers against the side of the track.

"Oh, what a horrid game. I won't play this!"

"Oh, do!" said Susie. "It's such fun." She took a smaller ball, rolled it easily, hit the center pin, knocking down all but two.

"That does seem like fun; I'll try it," Celia looked interested. She chose a small ball, gave it a toss and rolled it away off to one side.

"I hate this game—it's like Tomboys, anyway—I won't play it!"

"Well it is a nice game. I've played it ever since I was a baby; Papa held me in his arms and let me roll the tiniest ball of all. I just love it, and every one else does whoever sees this splendid bowling alley."

"Oh, not people from New York, I guess."

Here Frankie joined in the dispute. "People from New York? Indeed, yes! Almost all my father's friends who are not Yale professors or Southern people are from New York, and they are just the ones who think everything at the Old Stone House is perfect, so there! My father owns a great big school in New York, on Broadway. New York isn't so wonderful."

"A school's nothing," sneered Celia. "I live in a hotel!"

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"A hotel's nothing, either! My father has his school opposite two hotels, and he eats his meals at one, and he says he's so glad to get away on Friday from a hotel table, and he says he would rather have us all live on a desert island than in one of those hotbeds of—what did he say, Susie?"

"Oh, I don't know what he said; let's swing or try the horizontal bar. Can you do gym things, Celia?"

"I don't know what you mean?" answered Celia in a pet.

"I'll show you."

"Me, too," said Frankie. And with that the two sisters walked on the two parallel bars, swung on the horizontal bar, jumped from the ladder to the swing and the trapezes, and, in fact, performed all their best circus acts.

"Now you try it!" cried the children.

"No!" said Celia in disgust. "See your mussy skirts and all the dust flying. No, indeed—I hate this barn!"

"Oh, dear! Won't you see the calf and the colt and the doves and the pigs?" moaned Susie.

"It's all so dirty. I love my blue slippers; I don't want to hurt them."

"Well I wish to goodness you hadn't worn your blue slippers. Didn't Miss Sybil know we play till five?"

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"She told me not to dress up in my pa—in afternoon clothes" (Frankie knew she started to say 'party'), "but I'd rather wear my blue slippers than do anything else in the world. Any way, I hate barns." The Faxons dragged their unwilling feet toward the garden.

"Do you like flowers, Celia?"

"No. If I pick them bees always sting me. I like the big flower beds in Central Park."

"Do you like playing in summer houses? You take this morning glory one, Celia, and I'll have the eight-sided one all closed in with real windows, and Susie can take the grey one under the pines that has four doorways; I'll be grandmother and give a big tea party. I'll tease Bridget for all sorts of things—soda and lemons and vinegar, and we'll have a soda fountain after that. Will you, Celia?" This was a favorite play with Frankie who always said the soda was delicious, but Susie loathed it.

"Oh, I don't like messy things. Let's play croquet. Can you play, little Susie?" This adjective 'little' was too much for Susie, especially in connection with croquet, as that was her forte. Why she hit balls from across the croquet ground no one ever knew, for she never aimed, but played like the wind and with constant success.

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Mr. Faxon had planned this charming croquet ground. It was surrounded by apple trees, and seats of turf were made under two of the widest-spreading trees. The hedge of the orchard was on one side.

Celia wanted to play with the blue ball because it matched her shoes and sash. This was always Susie's ball, but she tried not to make a fuss. Celia announced that she always played first, but, as her ball went through only one wicket, she quickly changed. "Oh, I forgot! It's bad luck to go first; I'll go last." Even then luck was against her, and to her vexation Susie was at the middle wicket returning and Frankie had hit the first stake before she was at the middle wicket going down.

"Oh, I think that croquet is tiresome! Let's do something else."

"Then let's climb trees," cried Susie, still trying to make Celia happy. "Do you see that huge tree next to the hedge gateway? Papa named it the 'favorite tree.' See all those wooden seats and steps! We each have three seats of our own, and on Sundays Bettina plays the violin up there, and Papa brings down candy. Then we have Bible stories and hymns, and, last of all, Miss Alcott's stories, and it's all so heavenly! Don't you want to climb up?"

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"Oh, no! I'm not a squirrel nor a boy. I hate dirty trees and worms."

By this time Frankie's love of her fellow men was nearly finished. She felt like saying: "You're a goose; do go home!" but didn't. Celia was a guest and must be treated as such if Frankie's temper could stand the strain.

"Let's play in the house, then, Celia, until it is time to dress for tea." The children wandered slowly toward the house.

"Have you and little Susie any stylish clothes? Not so many as I, of course, for I am an only child, and I always get everything I want if I cry hard enough for it. Let's see your sashes and jewelry and hair ribbons."

"Oh (as a plan was suddenly born in Frankie's brain) no! Not now! Let's look at some of father's prize books."

Celia was led into the library. It was such a beautiful room, so full of dignity and charm that no one ever saw it without exclaiming or looking his joy. The southern sun streamed through one window; two other windows looked out upon the verandah and were frames for the wonderful view of the river. The fireplace was deep and wide, and the brass fire dogs were

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the finest in Davenport. The wall paper had been imported, as well as the panelled doors and brass knobs. Mahogany bookcases reached to the ceiling. The scenes on the walls were taken from the 'Lady of the Lake' and were full of romance and beauty to these poetry-loving children.

"My, what ugly paper!" exclaimed Celia. "In our hotel we have so much gilt, even the furniture has gold fringe—not all these dark sofas and tables. It is worse in here than out doors, I think."

Just then Mrs. Gannett came in to call the children. As she left the room Celia whispered: "Who is that old woman? Do you have to mind her, and isn't she made to call you 'Miss Susie?' Every one of the waiters and maids calls me 'Miss' and I just love it." Susie's eyes blazed. "She isn't like a common servant, and my father says she's a saint, and I love her so that if you don't like her I'll just hate you, and you needn't ever come to this house again!" Susie rushed from the room in tears, but Mrs. Gannett stopped her, dried her eyes, and made her go back, saying cheerfully: "Show her the doll house. She's sure to like that."

They went up into the nursery. Frankie entered a large closet pretending it was another room, and said in a low voice: "No, Marie, I'm not quite ready."

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Then disguising her tone very cleverly to carry out her plan of impressing Celia, answered: "Blease, Made-moiselle, to hurry." Then Frankie peeped into the nursery. "Excuse my talking to my French maid, Celia; she and I are deciding what Susie and I are to wear this afternoon. This maid has a broken English way of speaking but I understand her as she teaches us French, too. Do you speak French?" Then, going behind the door again, she said: "No Marie, don't get out our pink satin sashes, nor our blue satin, or the yellow sashes; we're tired of the satin ones especially. Now, how stupid of you—pink beads out, and pink slippers when I say no pink sashes to-day! Susie wants to wear her Roman sash."

"Vill you vare zee bronze slippers or zee fite, Made-moiselle?"

"Neither, Marie. The yellow with the white buttons."

"And zee pearl necklace?"

"Wait and I'll see. Susie will you wear your pearl necklace, or your locket and chain, or your coral beads? I'll match you."

"Oh, coral, Frankie!" called Susie almost bursting with laughter, for a coral necklace apiece was all the jewelry they owned.

"Now, Marie, the coral necklaces, and no pins, or rings, or bracelets to-day; we have only one little girl

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to tea, and not six as we generally do, and Mamma says that Patrick and Jim need not wait on the table, for Bridget will do for just one little girl. Celia is so used to men waiters she'll be glad to see a country tea table and one quiet little waitress."

"Oh, oui, I zee, Mademoiselle," answered the imaginary Marie. Frankie went on with various fibs until Susie was beside herself in choking the giggles back.

"How does your waitress look? Is she the homely one that gave us that horrid cake?" Here Frankie burst into the room half dressed and in great indignation, for she adored Bridget. "She is so horrid that Mrs. White and every one else borrows her for the levees and parties, and if you don't like our cake why did you gobble up your mother's piece and your own, too? Election cake is the nicest cake in the world, and the hardest to make, and every one who comes here just loves it but you!" In those days caterers were unknown and good waitresses were borrowed and loaned for festive occasions, as easily as flowers and dishes.

Now peace was flown forever! Never under that roof had such rude and naughty things been uttered. Celia was a little tigress and all that she could think of to say against the house, the furniture, the children's clothes, the pet kitten, and the precious dog she said.

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Frankie and Susie looked very sweet in their fresh white frocks, buff shoes and coral beads, with white ribbons on their hair; far too angelic to have such naughty thoughts in their minds, and such angry feeling in their hearts. Celia's dislike of all that they held dear had added fuel to the flame, and new insult was to come. Celia in her heart was jealous. She had supposed these little girls in a small New England town to be entirely primitive, and easily to be impressed by the city clothes and city manners of her ladyship. She was jealous when she heard her precious Aunt Sybil praise Susie before she had seen her, and also praise all that the Faxons owned or did or were. She had enjoyed numerous visits from Aunt Sybil, and she hated the thought of this Susie's living so near and claiming so much of her aunt's time and affection when she was far away and could not share it. In her heart she did hate all that the children loved.

When Susie, with joy and pride, opened the doll house, she cried: "Oh, mine has chimneys, and stoop in front, and is painted like a real New York brownstone house; yours has only wooden doors!" Susie's eyes filled, but she tried once more to remember Miss Sybil. With a little quaver in her voice she said: "See my lovely bride doll, and Lily who is just home from boarding school!"

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"Oh!" sneered Celia, "My doll is French, and says 'Mamma' and 'Papa;' I hate these old-fashioned things without hair."

Susie shut the doors of the doll house with a bang, crying angrily: "You shall never see my children again!"

Frankie still wanted to keep the peace; she also wanted to make Celia praise something, and said quickly: "Have you seen Lily's and Bettina's room? It is so lovely, it is all done over in green and white."

"Which is Milly? The one with the big mouth who is so short and squatty?"

"What!" shrieked Susie, "My beautiful sister Milly, the sweetest sister in the world; how dare you call her mouth big? She is twice as pretty as your Aunt Sybil, anyway—though I do love Miss Sybil, and I wouldn't call her squatty—but everyone loves Milly! You shan't see her again if you don't think she's beautiful! I just hate you, and I wish you'd stay in New York with your old gold fringe and furniture! I'll tell Miss Sybil I can't like you one bit, even for her sake, so there!"

Frankie stood by during this outburst but now her eyes blazed; to have Milly attacked was quite too much. "You needn't do anything for Celia for her aunt's sake, for she hasn't any aunt, and her grand-

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mother isn't her grandmother, and her mother isn't her mother, and she isn't anybody; she's a '*dopted child*, and her aunt's 'dopted, and her mother's 'dopted, and they all came out of big rooms with rows and rows of babies to choose from. I know it for Mrs. White said so."

Susie's face turned pale. Without entirely comprehending the magnitude of this sudden denouement, she knew Frankie was saying something that was very wicked, and as she watched Celia's face she trembled. Celia's eyes grew, not large, but smaller and smaller, as if cords of pain were drawing them together; her sallow skin turned livid, and her breath came as if she were choking. She ran as an animal would run who is wounded but can move. Not until she was out of the Old Stone House did she cry, and then what a sound it was! Susie never forgot it. Even Frankie leaned over and grabbed Susie's hand; for once she was thoroughly frightened. She seemed rooted to the spot listening for the steps she knew would come. What an awful thing she had done! Her own heart told her the sufferings she had caused. Susie, not realizing at all either the truth or what it meant to Celia, wondered if Frankie had made up the story. She spoke first: "Don't look like that, Frankie. You look just the way

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you did when I fell from the bars. Don't! Please say something! Tell me what you mean by every one being babies out of a big room."

"Oh, Susie, it's dreadful! I know I shouldn't have said it! I was on the stairs one night, and Mrs. Gannett was asleep, and I wanted some water, so I went down the straight stairs to get Mamma. I was halfway down when I heard Mrs. White's voice, and this is what she said—'t was 'way back last summer so I don't know just what it was, only she told Mamma that she prayed for babies and they never came. She wanted two little sisters, one with blue eyes and one with brown, so she went to a big place with rows of babies in it and picked out Miss Mary and Miss Sybil and called them sisters. She made one draw and made the other sing—even if they really couldn't before they were taught—and no one knew it. But somehow she had to tell Mamma, because Mamma loved Miss Sybil so and seemed to wonder why Miss Mary—that's Mrs. Warfield—wasn't a scrap like Miss Sybil. That's the reason why I've kept saying ever since when you're good and I'm bad and people love you so that I must be a 'dopted child and must have been picked out from rows and rows of babies. Oh, dear! I shouldn't have heard and I shouldn't have told for even Mamma said: 'Mrs.

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White, I wish I didn't know this. After all these years it isn't right to tell me, though I shall never repeat it, not even to my husband.' Oh, Susie, now I've told! What will Mrs. White do to me? Will she put me in jail?"

"I 'spose she will, and put me there, too, and it's all 'cause you disobeyed and sat on cold stairs and listened, and now you see it doesn't pay, for God's punishing you a lot this time."

Frankie sank down by the doll house; Susie huddled near her, still holding hands, cold and in dread of steps on the walk and the ring at the door bell. It was not many moments before Mrs. White did come over and for a full hour she sat in the drawing room with Mrs. Faxon. Frankie was summoned, and this time even Bridget had no joke to offer—she felt thunder in the air. Frankie told the whole story and Mrs. Faxon's distress was written on her face. Mrs. White was one of her dearest friends, whose joy in one of her adopted children had been bruised at the heart. Celia had burst upon the three ladies as they sewed together on the verandah, and with screams of rage and fear had blurted out Frankie's terrible story. Mrs. White had told Celia quietly never to notice what children said in temper, but the expression on her mother's face

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had made the sisters feel that Frankie had spoken the truth. After Celia was seated at her supper Mrs. White told the whole story and then had come over to the Old Stone House. What could Mrs. Faxon say? What could she do? She felt that in spite of her long friendship the past could never be just the same. Frankie looked old and pinched when she came upstairs and slowly began to undress. She for once had nothing to say to Susie, who watched her, wide-eyed, and started to go to bed, too.

Late that evening as Mrs. Faxon sat reading in the library (Mr. Faxon was away in the summer camp and the maids had retired) she heard a faint ring at the doorbell. She walked timidly to see who it could be. In the bright light of the hall gas she saw behind the blinds Sybil's pale yet eager face.

"Dear Mrs. Faxon, I knew you'd sleep better if I came over to tell you not to grieve about Frankie's telling this secret. I know how you regret it, but really I think it is a blessing to have the truth told. It's a shame to have it come out just the way it did, but I believe I love Mamma more than ever now that I know what she has saved us from, and how she has cared for us all these years. And though she feels great indignation now towards Frankie I'm sure in time

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she will forget the associations of pain when she sees the child's face. You and I love each other too well for any cloud to separate us, and never fear—I'll win Mamma over. But isn't it too bad about Celia's visit? I love Susie and I did want these two especially to be friends. Of course, mother cannot see that Celia was at all to blame. I understand children, and I know that her aggravating ways brought it all on. Even this morning she was disagreeable. Oh, how she needs a sister! Even an adopted one just now would save her from being the spoiled and selfish child she is! Good-night, dear Mrs. Faxon. No; I'm not afraid to run home. Now promise me to go to sleep."

Mrs. Faxon looked into those frank and tender eyes and kissed the soft cheek. "After Milly, you are the sweetest girl in the world."

VI

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THE FAXON children were all devoted to animals, and Bettina was the only one whose experience had made her afraid of anything. While walking quietly with Papa one day, when only three years old, a stray Newfoundland dog leaped on her, scratched her bare shoulders with his nails, and put his teeth against her cheek. The fright was a serious thing to Bettina, and for years even the smallest dog had no interest for her.

A nurse, taking Mrs. Gannett's place while the latter was devoting all her time to sick little Frankie, was responsible for the terror which Bettina felt towards cats. Bettina was very fond of drawing the cows with their little baby calves. Little pigs, too, when their skins shone pink through the short white bristles, were often portrayed upon her painting tablet.

The cows were great pets; one soft-eyed Alderney, named "Buttercup," was so clever that she learned how to lift the iron latch of the gate by the watering trough. This gate led to a grass path (a delight in itself, since it was full of clover), and at the end was

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the hawthorn arch opening into the orchard—the Eden of Buttercup's dreams. She would hold the gate open long enough for her calf to go in and then shut it quickly, giving the other cow a glance of triumph. Mrs. Faxon said it reminded her of women who cleverly open the doors of social advancement to their own daughters, and close it, if possible, against their deserving neighbors.

The Faxon children were so tender-hearted that when one cow swallowed a wire and died from the effects, they burst into tears whenever they saw the other cow standing alone.

One afternoon Mrs. Gannett was walking on Elm Street with the younger children, when Frankie exclaimed: "There's Soft Eyes, our own cow, in Mr. Alcott's orchard!" They hurried back to tell Patrick, but alas! too late! Soft Eyes had eaten so many apples and so rapidly, that she was swollen to "the size of an elephant," as Susie said, and she never recovered.

The next cow excitement was dramatic. A gluttonous cow, named "Clover," had climbed up the stairs that led from the stable to the hay loft. She ate, and ate, and was in bliss until she remembered her calf, and then she mooed most piteously. When Patrick found her his first thought was how to get her down. The

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men-servants on the places near by all came to help, but it was Patrick who made the only practical suggestion. The cow would not go down the stairs, so he cut the floor as a platform for her to stand on comfortably, and put iron hoops on the corners, tied ropes to the hoops and lowered the cow into the stable.

The "big" children could not have been induced to watch such a scarey performance. Frankie, "unknownst," as Mrs. Gannett said, climbed through the hole where the hay was thrown down into the box stall, dragging Susie after her, and sat upon the step of the dove cote. These steps were right above the seat of action, but as the dove cote was in the peak of the side of the high barn, and the dove cote door was closed, it was so dark that no one could see them. Just as the men, with Patrick shouting orders, were lowering the cow, Susie said: "Oh, don't drop her!" in a high-pitched excited voice. "Begorra, is it witches or ghosts ye keep here, Patrick? I 'most let go me rope—whish now! Will it call again?" cried out one of the men. Susie buried her head in Frankie's lap and did not look up until the men had gone and all was quiet again. Then Frankie went into the cow's stall to pat her and to see if she looked queer after her strange experience.

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The horse, "Brown Bess," was gentle but swift of foot. One dark afternoon she had stood still on the slippery ice of a steep hill, the sleigh had overturned and Frankie was lying under her body. The strain of standing so long was great, but she held the sleigh there until Mr. Faxon had pulled out Frankie unhurt. When the boys were in summer camp on the river, Mrs. Faxon would drive Brown Bess down twice a week with fresh supplies of food. And, oh! the fun the children had sitting at the camp table, hearing the ripples of the river on the shore and enjoying the good things to eat. They never forgot the camp fire after, nor the college songs, nor the drive home with an older boy who returned in the morning to camp by train.

One day at breakfast the children were told of a great surprise that awaited them, and Papa would show it to them after the meal was over.

"What color is it?" asked Frankie.

"Black," answered Papa.

"How big is it?" was Susie's question.

"As big as you."

"Oh, I know! It's a baby brother!"

"The idea, Susie, of a black baby brother! It must be a Newfoundland dog."

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"I guess it's a cow, then," said Susie, "or a rooster, or a pig!"

"How horrid and ugly they'd be all black!" sneered Frankie. "We'd better hurry up or we'll never know what it is."

Patrick waited until the whole family was ready to walk down the steps through the octagonal summer house, down the three terraces, and across by the greenhouse path, through the gate with the iron latch, and there—what did they see? Brown Bess standing by the watering trough and beside her the prettiest jet-black colt, so slender and graceful that they all cried out, "Oh, what a beauty!"

"Name her, Millicent," said Mr. Faxon.

"I'll call her Gypsy, Papa; for she is black and looks so spirited."

"She is yours, Millicent; but I shall expect Bettina to learn to ride her, too. Isn't she a charmer?"

Milly adored this new possession, and, in fact, so did every one. Gyp was as tame as a kitten and just as playful. Patrick would lead her up every fine morning to the stone terrace, where she would whinny at the dining-room window for her salt or sugar treat. Milly was generous and would let the children feed the precious pet in turn. It seemed as if the years would

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never pass until the colt was broken to the saddle. Bettina and Millicent had many a happy time riding her. Brown Bess was a saddle horse, too, but to ride Gypsy was a keen joy.

Bettina came home holding her riding habit over her arm, her hat had fallen to one side and she was panting as if greatly excited.

"Where is Gypsy? Have you had an accident?" asked Milly quickly.

"Oh, not exactly," answered Bettina. "A dog barked at Gyp and I was so scared I jumped down and tied Gypsy to a tree and let the dog have her to bark at and I ran home."

"Where were you? How did you dare leave that valuable horse where any one could steal it?"

"Oh, I'm sure no one would dare do that! I left her only two miles out on the Melburn road."

Milly ordered Patrick at once to drive with Brown Bess to try to find her precious Gypsy. Millicent was righteously indignant, and it was some time before Bettina was permitted to ride again.

"If you are so afraid of dogs you had better not ride my horse again."

"If you had been scared, the way I was, by that Newfoundland dog, you wouldn't forget it, either."

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"You ought to conquer your fear of dogs and cats; it makes you seem perfectly ridiculous."

"Oh, dear! I wish that Maggie Maloney hadn't been my nurse when Frankie was sick, and then I would love cats as well as you do."

When Bettina was three years old this substitute nurse, Maggie, was determined to go to a Jubilee Service every night. Milly had fallen from her crib and broken her collar bone once, and since then Mr. Faxon had made the rule that a nurse was always to stay in the room. Maggie Maloney told Bettina that the moment she took the light away a great white cat would appear upon the wall; her feet stretched out, also her tail and head, and all her teeth and claws showing. The moment Bettina cried out the cat would drop right on her chest and smother her. This was her parting threat every night. The child lay in a torpor of fear until the nurse's return. Bettina was more than twenty years old before she overcame her horror of cats, and not until she was in her teens did she tell Milly the true story of Maggie Maloney.

Susie found a new pet one day, and as she saw it first she announced that it was hers.

"What is it like?" asked Frankie.

"Oh, the softest white-and-black big kitten, and it's on the wall by the pig-pen."

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"You mean a cat?" asked Frankie.

"No, it's not the shape of a cat; it's a big kitten, I tell you; and it's mine. It's going to be your Muff's brother."

Muff at this time was a great concern of Susie, for though she was Frankie's kitten, she was just now in Susie's charge. A few days before this, Jim Gannett, to tease Susie, had kicked towards Muff, not really meaning to hit her; but as his foot went out the cellar door fell upon Muff's front paw. How Susie cried! 'Twas months before she pretended that she could forgive Jim. She put Muff in her own bed and ran to her mother, sobbing and talking incoherently. "Do send for the doctor," was all Mrs. Faxon could understand. Without inquiry she rang the bell and ordered Bridget to send Jim for the doctor.

"Oh, her leg! Oh, how she looked at me!" Susie kept repeating. Finally she led her mother into the nursery. Mrs. Faxon had expected to see Frankie, but instead there was Muff huddled under the blankets. When Dr. Pemberton came Susie clung to him, begging him to set the paw, and he did, and promised that in a few weeks Muff would run and play as friskily as ever.

The kitten was settled in a box full of hay; on top of that a doll's knitted blanket. She had a house, too, on

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the upper verandah. Her meals were brought up sometimes by Frankie, but usually Susie was the one that remembered.

Susie's own Maltese cat, Sawnie by name, was long and thin, no matter how much cream Susie gave him. This new pet, the black-and-white big kitten, was plump and fluffy like Muff, and Susie was all aglow with joy over her new possession. Her ecstasy was short-lived. The next day Patrick was standing, gun in hand, by the pig-pen wall.

"What's the gun for, Patrick?" asked Susie.

"I've caught that old skunk at last that's been bothering us so long. He'll trouble us no more, for it's dead he is!"

"Oh!" sobbed Susie. "My snunk! My darling kitty snunk! It's wicked to kill my pet snunk!"

Nothing could comfort her, and nothing could persuade her that skunks could never become household pets.

When the detested January thaw began, coasting was temporarily spoiled. Time would drag heavily for Susie. She seemed for a few days always to be sitting still in some warm corner, with a shawl wrapped around some precious new possession.

"What have you, Susie?" asked Frankie.

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"It's my newest pet, and you shan't see it; you'll take it from me and hide it."

Bettina watched Susie to see where she hid this "something." Susie was too quick and clever for her. After several days had passed Mrs. Faxon said, as she entered the living-room: "There's a very strange odor in this room. What is it? Susie, it seems to be near you! It is! It's in that shawl. What have you there?" Susie began to cry. "Oh, don't take my newest pet away from me?" Mrs. Faxon insisted on opening the shawl which was wound around and around—what do you think? A little dead squirrel! Susie had found it frozen days before under the ever-green trees. How she cried, and how very unreasonable and naughty she was when her newest pet was taken away from her I will not describe.

Millicent was the only one of the children that owned a bird. "Violet" was the name of this exquisite light-yellow canary. He was so tame that he took seed from between Milly's lips, standing on her finger during the process. He was out of his cage by the hour, and flying all over the spacious house. He would run on Millicent's fingers when she was playing the piano. At last another bird was bought as a companion for Violet. He sang so long and so loud his sweet song of

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welcome that he dropped dead in his cage. His little heart literally stopped beating for pure joy. He was buried in a pretty white box and was wrapped up in Milly's lace-edged handkerchief, and upon that was placed a Marechal Nil rose to match the perfect yellow of his feathers. His little grave was lovingly remembered by the children.

Sally was a mother dog, not attractive except by her soft brown eyes, her devotion, and her gift of four puppies to the children every spring. The prettiest puppy was always kept and the other three given away. One spring there were two Spitz puppies that were so pretty that the rule was broken. Frankie and Susie were each permitted to keep one. "King" and "Prince" were their names. All the pin money was saved to buy fresh ribbons for these two dogs. Susie named hers "King," and she would tie a blue ribbon around his neck and tail, and one on each of his four paws. Prince was bewitching in pink. The children bathed them when there was nothing better to do. One day as they shivered longer than usual after the bath, Frankie put both dogs between the blankets in Bettina's bed, as the sun was streaming upon it. Bettina screamed when she set something down on the bed in a half-dark room and felt the warm, breathing

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things under her hand. Frankie had entirely forgotten where she had put them.

A friend in the country gave Susie a white rooster, and that started the chicken mania. Susie and Frankie together owned the same number of hens as there were persons in the household. "Let's name them after the real people?" said Frankie. "I'll call my handsome white one 'Mrs. Faxon.'" Susie chose Mrs. Gannett and Milly for two of hers, and at last the names and the hens were matched. The children always spoke of their hens by their names, and the sentences sounded so ridiculous as to provoke much laughter. One day Frankie walked disconsolate in the front of the house looking in vain for a lost hen. A student came by and enquired kindly, "What is the matter, Frances?" "I'm so troubled!" was the response. "Mrs. Faxon has blind staggers and is lost, Millicent won't stay in one nest, or even in the barn, and I find eggs in the greenhouse, and Bridget is moulting or sick or something, and Easter's near and I won't get any egg money." Many explanations followed these astounding statements.

The doves were a constant joy to the children, and particularly fascinating to Susie. There was a hundred altogether. Their soft "coo, coo," and the patter of

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their delicate feet on the roof had a home-making sound. On bright days in March, as the melting snow dripped from the roof of the barn, Susie would climb with Frankie to the top of the bowling alley and there, with all the winds but the South shut off, they would bask in the sun and watch the doves walking and pecking on the bare ground below. They were so tame that they would come close to the children. The colors on their breasts would shine like changing diamonds. The dove-colored ones and the white were Susie's favorites, but there were others of a pinkish brown that were wonderful.

One day Frankie answered a neighbor who had enquired for her Mamma, who had been ill. "Oh, she's better! She's just eaten two whole squaws!" Susie would never touch a piece of a precious baby pigeon, and would have felt as much like a cannibal to have eaten one as if a squab were a squaw. She really loved the doves, and the memory of them all the days of her life was a very precious one. Those lines,

"with a Sabbath sound

As of doves in quiet neighborhoods,"

could almost bring tears to her eyes with longing for the departed but ever-living past.

VII

SORROW VISITS THE OLD STONE HOUSE

FRANKIE opened her eyes, and for a moment forgot that she was not in her own dear nursery, but at Sadie Hill's, where, for two long weeks, she and her little sister had been staying. Susie's bed was across the room, and in the gray light of very early dawn Frankie's heavy eyes could just see as in a shadow, the outline of her little sister's cheek against the white pillow. Susie always slept on her "funt," as she pronounced "front," and with both hands away up under the pillow. She had cried herself to sleep almost every night since the one—it seemed months ago—when Mrs. Gannett had come up with her to the Hills' to explain about her clothes and to see that her first night away from her beloved home should be as natural as possible. Frankie, with her usual happy way of taking life, saw only fun and adventure in the visit. "Green Lawn" was a wonderful place: the house itself was even larger than her own home, and besides the lawn with its walks on either side shaded by ever-green trees, there were acres and acres of wild ravine where a gurgling brook ran over shiny white stones

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and soft velvety moss grew on the edges. This seemed enchanted land to Susie as well as to Frankie. Dr. Pemberton had taken the children into the library and had told them, as he held a child on each knee and stroked their soft bright hair, how very ill their dear father was; that now he was too ill to speak their names—perhaps to know their faces; that only one thing could be added to all that was being done to save his precious life, and that was perfect quiet. The consulting physician from New Haven had told him a moment ago that not a voice or a footfall must reach the darkened sickroom.

“But,” pleaded Susie, as the tears rolled down her cheeks, “don’t you think we love him enough to remember to whisper and to walk on tip-toe?”

“My dear child, if you did remember, it would be very bad for you, for children who have always laughed and frolicked about in this dear old home would pine under such restraint. You have been very quiet all through these last six weeks, but since your mother is ill, too, it has become extremely difficult. If you children are safe and happy playing with Sadie Hill, then all the grown-ups here will have so much less to do for you, and more time to give to your dear father. Frankie, you will go willingly, won’t you, and help

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Susie to bear the separation from Mrs. Gannett? You can do so much with Susie if you really try."

When this idea of sending the children away was discussed, Mrs. Gannett went to Dr. Pemberton and said softly: "If Susie's taken from me, I know, sir, that she'll neither sleep nor eat. She's so quiet she's like a mouse; let Frankie go—she's the noisy one."

The kind doctor did not know which way to turn. He knew the sensitiveness of Susie's nature, and feared that, with both the parents ill, she would grieve her little heart sick with dismal forebodings. He did not forget how Susie had hovered around the front of the house waiting for his carriage when Mrs. Gannett was ill only last summer; how she would wait until he was safe in the nursery, and then crouch by the door, listening wide-eyed and breathless to see whether her mother and he talked hopefully of Mrs. Gannett's condition. One day he had opened the door so quickly that Susie fell against his feet; she grabbed his knees and, with streaming eyes, said: "Is she going to die, Dr. Pemberton?" He took her in his arms and carried her to the nurse's bed. "Tell her, Mrs. Gannett, how strong you feel this morning."

"Indeed, I'll be up and brushing your silky hair in a week!" was the smiling answer.

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"Oh, if you're better you can eat this," said Susie in a low voice, holding a huge and perfectly ripened pear. "This is from my birthday tree, and I've saved it days and days for you!" How the doctor smiled! "Pears are not just the best food after weeks of liquid diet, Susie. I'm sure if you ate the pear it would do Mrs. Gannett more good. But tell me, what is a birthday tree? Is it a new variety of pear?"

"Oh, no! It's just Papa's idea. He always planted one fruit tree and one pretty tree as near as he could to our birthdays, and then we can give away our own fruit, and my tree never bears many, but such splendid ones!"

This little scene and many others like it made it hard for the doctor to separate Susie from her nurse, and yet it was now imperative.

"I'd love to go!" said Frankie eagerly. "Think of waking up and seeing Sadie before breakfast, and playing in the ravine all day long! I wonder how it looks when it rains and the drops go into the brook and the fish are scared! I want to go!"

Susie nestled her head against the doctor's coat. "I'll hate it every minute and cry—I can't help it when I love every one here so—but I'll go if it will make Papa get well."

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As the children drove off with Patrick, they little knew that the smiles of those who were waving good-bye so brightly were turned to choking sobs so soon as the carriage was out of sight.

Frankie was such an erratic sleeper that she often wakened at any unearthly hour, but Susie was different, and, to Frankie's surprise, Susie's eyes were open now and full of tears.

"Don't cry, what is it—a bad dream?" asked Frankie, jumping over quickly to the other bed.

"O Frankie, I shall scream if I can't let the tears come. Some big lump is choking me, and a big stone is here," and she pointed to her heart. "I believe I shall die if I can't see Papa and Mama, Mrs. Gannett and Milly! I'd believe they're all dead and Mrs. Hill won't tell us, and we'll never see our beautiful home again! Oh, I want my kitten, and I want all my dolls. I must go home! I'll stay in bed in the attic—I won't even speak—or I'll live in the covered summer house! Oh, please, Frankie, take me home!"

"All right," answered Frankie quickly. "I say, let's go; no one's up now, or awake, and if we can only get home and then hide they can't find us. It's much nicer to play here just when we want to, but not nights and mornings. I'll button your waist and you can carry

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your shoes and I'll lace them when we get out on the lawn."

Susie's fingers were so cold from fear and excitement she could hardly put on her clothes. It was the second day of June. The birds were singing in that wonderful way they sing only at dawn. The heavenly, aspiring, prayerful hush in the air went deep into Susie's soul; but, alas! it was so accompanied by nameless fear and sense of loss that for all the days of her life the beauty of a dawn meant for her not life but death.

The children tip-toed past all the sleeping-rooms down the wide stairway, through the library, through the reception-room, into the long music-room, and there, by unfastening a French window, they noiselessly reached the lawn. The trees were in their first fresh green and the grass was of that tender shade so impossible to paint. The whole landscape seemed under a spell, and Susie felt that a great cloak of foreboding and grief wrapped her 'round. Her eyes did not see, nor her feet feel the pavement under them. The college buildings, closed and still, seemed like tombs; the houses, hushed in sleep, were like pictures of a remembered place. Life was gone from all the familiar sights. Susie could not speak her thoughts; indeed, the feelings of her heart were not born into thoughts. As the

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evergreens of the Old Stone House darkened the green of the maples, Susie's feet quickened their pace; she longed to see the outline of her home; she felt that for years she had been exiled. Some angel in the sky above seemed to be telling her that this was a New Stone House; that the past joy was over; that babyhood with its completeness of sheltering love was gone; that a childhood checkered by hope and fear, by love and struggle, had come. Will some one who reads this little story say: "And how can these things be?" But we who live in dreams and ideals, in feelings which lie too deep for words, whose capacity for joy and pain needs music and poetry and art to express it, we can imagine the unseen future and the remembered past knocking loudly at the door of Susie's heart.

The children were now at the iron arch of the gate. The robin's liquid note was all they heard. Every blind was closed. They passed on down the Ha Ha wall, down between the evergreens that reached away up to the attic rooms; they looked at the windows of Bridget's bedchamber. All was still.

"Susie, it must be night, only it can't be. Come, let's sit on the stone steps by the laundry; let's wait 'till Bridget finds us there. She'll understand; she won't send us back. She'll hide us in the cellar that's under the other cellar; won't she, Susie?"

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Susie's head was resting on her knees and she was shivering with cold.

"O Frankie, every one is dead; we are orphans. Do you 'spose we've been praying for ourselves all these years?"

Just then the door opened behind them and Bridget, with tear-stained face, put her arms about both children.

"You poor darlings! How ever in the world did you get here? It's only a little past four in the morning!"

"O, Bridget, something waked us and we had to come home; and please say we needn't go back! You will let us stay, Bridget, won't you?"

"Indeed you can stay, my darlings; and now come in from the cold step. My, there's a chill in the air, or in my poor heart it may be; and we'll make some tea, and I'll give you each a piece of cake before another soul sees you." And an inner voice kept saying: "To think that at four o'clock it was they woke up, the poor dears! God rest his soul! At four o'clock it went!"

The children ate and drank, wondering as they saw Ann with her head buried in her apron, rocking at the kitchen table. No sound came from upstairs. Bridget knew not what to say, but food was necessary.

"I must see darling Mrs. Gannett; she won't mind

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being waked up, she never sleeps anyway; she just watches me all night to see if I am covered," said Susie. "And I'll get Milly to take me in to see Mamma. She can see me, can't she, Bridget? And, oh, my darling father; do take me to him on tip-toe, Bridget."

Hand in hand they went up the verandah stairs. As they opened the gate, a man's step and a man's voice almost frightened them. Could Papa be well and up and dressed and they be kept far away? No, it was Uncle Wilton, whom they had not seen for two years, and who was very like papa, and very dear to them. Susie sprang to his arms, but before she could speak her joy at seeing him he whispered: "Little children, you must learn to love and trust me very much, for your own dear father's in heaven now and he left you to my care. His only sorrow is that he can't be close by you, but he is still very near—as near as God—and his prayers for you will never be unanswered."

"Do you mean he's dead?" asked Frankie. "My young father! So strong, so fond of play and fun; why, I thought you were old if you died, or else a little weak baby like Mamma's baby Harold."

Susie did not speak at first. She clung to her uncle in a paroxysm of grief, and then said between her sobs: "Is Mamma dead, too? Can't I see Mrs. Gannett?"

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Can't I ever see Milly or Bettina again?" Just then her nurse appeared and Susie was carried in those arms, so strong with love, up to Milly and Bettina. They told her how ill her mother was, and how it might make her much worse if she saw Susie, and at last the little heart accepted the adult point-of-view and lost an edge of its own pain by longing to help another heart bear its too heavy burden. "I'll take care of Mamma. I'll buy her candy, and I'll take all the money in my iron bank to get her flowers as Papa always did. Yes, Milly, I will stop crying so that if dear Mamma could see me my eyes wouldn't look blinded."

Oh, the length of that day! The effort of every one in that broken home to be brave for the sake of the others, the floral tributes that came, the letters, the telegrams, the dressmaker sitting with long pieces of black material everywhere; the muffled bell, the strips of carpet on the polished hall, the winding stairs unused because of noise, the whispering in the darkened rooms, the soreness of heart when Aunt Delia's arrival was known, and the wonder how they could mind her with Papa not there to take their part, and poor Mamma so ill! Susie never forgot how sad Milly looked as she opened the boxes which held their sweet summer hats, all a mass of white fluff, and slowly put in a

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knot of black here and there. Susie never forgot the morning—it seemed months after they left Green Lawn—when Uncle Wilton and all the weeping servants moved slowly into the long drawing-room. How could they ever play blindman's buff in that room again? How like a mockery the figures on the wall; the paper represented a Turkish gala day, and every figure was alive with the spirit of a carnival, when Milly and Bettina stood by that long, narrow, black bed; and oh! how old Bettina was in her new dress. Why, it seemed as long as Mamma's, and she was as tall as Mamma and taller! And Milly! why, she was suddenly a real lady and would never play with Susie again! They all knelt while dear Uncle Wilton prayed with such deep feeling and in so wonderful a way that the children felt as if both Papa and God were in the room and they could never be exactly alone again. Susie remembered how strange it seemed that during the service in the afternoon she couldn't cry any more; she and Frankie sat on the window sill of the guest room, where years ago, "when I was a little girl," Susie said to herself, she had put flowers for Mr. Halifax—and now all was over and the carriages were moving up slowly to the stone steps, and then leaving, and Frankie said, "I'll choose black."

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"Then I'll take white," added Susie. As usual, Frankie had the lion's share. Years after Susie wondered how she could have played that game of counting horses of a chosen color as they passed on that day. But we who live in this world know that grief can spend itself for the moment and the reaction of constant weeping will make older people notice details far removed from the deep sorrow which has changed life for them forever.

The presence of Aunt Delia in the house was a great trial. Mrs. Faxon was so ill that she could see no one but Milly and the servants. She was not told for days that Mr. Faxon was dead. Aunt Delia announced that she should stay until she could talk to Sister Susanne and plan with her for the future of the children. Milly was in despair. At last she and Bridget formed a plan: they wrote to Mrs. Wilton Faxon, who was full of love and understanding, and asked her to come with so many of her family that there would be no room in the house for Aunt Delia. There was one Sunday to live through, and it was the first time that Milly and Bettina, in their black clothes, were to attend church. Miss Faxon belonged to a different denomination. "I should think you'd go with us just this once!" said Bettina, with tears ready to fall.

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"No, indeed! My Church is my Church. I'll take Susie with me, and you take Frankie, so they won't misbehave and get silly together."

"Oh!" moaned Susie, "Mrs. Gannett has promised to take me to her chapel, for the nuns are to take the veil—all the white ones—and I know Mamma would let me go."

"Indeed, these domineering old Irish servants are governing this whole establishment! Not while I am in charge here shall one of my brother's children enter the doors of Rome! He was a Protestant!"

"Rome," said Frankie, "that has gates! It's a city and you have to cross the ocean and get there in a boat!"

No tears of Susie, nor Milly's pleadings, could alter Aunt Delia's decision. Susie must go to her Church. Mrs. Gannett sadly dressed her, Milly tied her black sash, and, with lagging steps and tears and protests, she was dragged off at Aunt Delia's side. When Miss Faxon knelt to pray, Susie, who was placed safe in a corner, slid behind her aunt and was down the long aisle and out of the church like a deer, panting and crying, not daring to look back. She ran through to the next long street just in time to meet Milly and Frankie; so the four sisters in their grief were not

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divided in that first Church Service after their father's death.

Dr. Pemberton was so thankful when he saw the sweet face of Aunt Lucile the next day, that he beamed at each member of the household. "I hope," he said, "that Miss Faxon will never come to this house again. She should visit only houses where men are masters." When Mamma was able at last to see the children, they all gathered about her, and, looking up into the kind doctor's face, she said: "I will consent to eat and drink all these distasteful preparations; I will even go away for two months, as you suggest; I will try to live for these four daughters whom their father loved so dearly."

Susie followed the doctor to his carriage. "Tell me how big, strong people like Papa ever do die? Why don't you die?"

"My little girl, your father was the strongest man I ever knew; he used to break a half-inch board with a blow of his hand; he could swim further than any of his pupils at camp; but, Susie, he never learned how to rest. He had the largest private school in New York; he edited your uncle's Greek grammar; he wrote for a Sunday paper; he preached at a Mission Chapel, and he was Superintendent of a Sunday school. He never

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remembered himself. He never said 'No' to any one whom he could serve; he was a devoted husband, the most loving of fathers, the best of friends. He lived as much in a year as I do in ten. I tell you this because you are like him, Susie, and I mean to save your life so you can be a help and comfort to your mother. Now, remember, you and I are to get her well and then keep her so. Often the youngest child in the house is the one who keeps the gloomy thoughts away. You and I are in a club, and we are going to keep well and take Papa's place; he was like sunshine in his home, you know. If you're sick or anything goes wrong, don't bother Milly and never let Mamma know; tell your nurse or your old doctor." With a kiss and a long look into Susie's thoughtful eyes, Dr. Pemberton drove away. How the child thanked him always for giving her his trust and confidence, and for showing her how to be a real help to her mother!

It seemed as if everything that Susie did brought tender memories that dimmed her eyes. When she knelt down at night to say her prayers—the same old prayers, "O God, bless Papa"—"Can I say that now? No! I'll say, 'O God and Papa bless us, and don't take Mamma away; don't let any robbers enter this house to-night; don't let our house burn down; and, O God,

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help Mrs. Gannett not to die, and make us all not quarrel, and bless the orphans—and me, 'cause I'm an orphan now. Amen.'”

There were many nights after Susie was in bed when she tried to go to sleep and could not. She would hear the click of Mrs. Gannett's scissors hitting against her thimble; the soft rustle of the garments mended and laid aside; the rolling spool as it was placed upon the table after a thread was broken from it. She would lie there awake often until the students were returning from their society halls. She would hear their familiar songs, “Psi Upsilon,” “Upi Dee,” “Lauriger Horatius.” She knew them and loved to hear them, but now everything seemed different. She wondered why daytimes were easier to bear. Perhaps it was because Frankie kept her cheered and diverted, and that, for Mamma's sake, she herself tried to keep a smiling face. But oh! the moment she was in bed she seemed to recall every happy hour spent with her dear father. She wondered if she should wear the sky-blue plush bonnet and the black plush cloak this winter! Now no strong father would take her walking and look so proud when friends stopped to talk, and always remarked about Susie's bright cheeks and golden hair. Mamma never walked, and Mrs. Gannett could not

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go in the morning. How long ago it seemed when Papa had taken her down to have her picture taken just before her long hair was cut off! How Papa patted the golden mass as it lay on the black cloak away down to the bottom! How he begged Dr. Pemberton to change his mind and say that it wasn't taking her strength away from her. How Papa told her stories when Mrs. Gannett brushed and combed "the golden fleece"—his own name of it—in the evenings! How he smiled when people said, "We mustn't make Susie vain by praising her wonderful hair." "You couldn't do that," he would answer, "for her hair is a gift of God. She had nothing to do with His giving it to her. I enjoy it as I do sunlight streaming through my window. I couldn't be vain because it enters my room." Susie remembered how cross the photographer was and how Papa told her that the picture was for him so he could always see his baby with her long hair, and she was good after that and let the cross man take her picture. And how the photograph was framed and hung in the parlor; but where was Papa who loved it so? She recalled the flood of tears that blinded her eyes and the naughty passion she was in when Bridget saw her first with her short hair and said: "O Tommy, is it looking for Susie you are?" "I'm

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not Tommy; I'm Susie!" "Oh, no! Susie had long hair. She's a girl." "But I am Susie. See my dress!" "O, little boy," replied Bridget, "you shouldn't steal Susie's clothes, Mrs. Gannett will see to you." And just then Papa came and said: "This child may be called 'Susie Tomazina' while her hair is short. She'll be a very happy little girl to-night when there are no snarls to comb out, and when she can wet her head in the brook the way Sadie and Frankie do, and dry it in a trice. I have a surprise for any one in this house who has just had a picture taken. Who is the lucky girl?" And high in the air he held a blue box, heart-shaped, and in it—would Susie ever forget?—a whole pound of pink-sugared almonds for her very own to give to any one she loved! Why was it that Papa could always settle quarrels, and before one knew it turn tears into smiles? How dull the weeks would be! No looking forward to the end of camp; no driving home to see the boys in their tents; no picnics in Laurel Grove; no trips to New York to see father's school; no letters to write to father, and—oh, worse still—no letters to get from him! It would be no use to count the days now until Friday came, and in the snow on Saturdays there would be no long sleigh rides with dear Papa, and no walks far upon country hills. What

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would Thanksgiving be like? Who would start blind-man's buff? How they had loved it—the open fire in the library, the wide doors all thrown open, the many happy faces, the mirth and frolic! Now there would never be a real Thanksgiving in the Old Stone House again! And how could Christmas be Christmas without Papa to open his stocking with the children in the soft firelight? How he had loved every single trifle the children had made for him! And oh! would there ever be a Christmas tree again? That glory of lights and silver and gold and gifts! That huge tree between the library and parlor where every side of it could be seen! What would the old boys do now—who used to come back to the Old Stone House to keep a “Merry Christmas?” And Fourth of July so near! What a day it would be to dread! And then a birthday—oh! Why did all these days have to come every year? Who would call her his “last rose of summer?” Who could ever make a birthday seem so sweet, so full of joy, and yet so full of wanting to be a very good Susie all the next year?

Poor little fatherless child! These memories and these dreams of future pain were very hard for her to bear. But the very sensitiveness which made the suffering keen in those early days was its own compensation,

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for, as the years went by, who could understand trouble of any kind more deeply or more quickly than Susie, who, as a little child, was “acquainted with grief?”

VIII

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I CAN'T imagine why Mary doesn't come for you, Susie dear," said Mrs. Faxon. "It surely is past your bedtime. Kiss us all good-night and go up by yourself to the nursery. Frankie is probably there waiting for you."

Susie was sitting on the wide stone steps, the little fawn skin under her; and Milly and Bettina were walking up and down between the stone porch and the gate. Mrs. Faxon had just closed the French book she was reading as the gloaming was rapidly becoming night.

How Susie hated to go to bed on these wonderful summer evenings! The double row of elm trees arching over the wide street in front, the deep mysterious color of the evergreens beyond the Ha Ha wall touching the tender blue of the sky, the delicious odor of lilies as she and Frankie played last tag in the fern and lily garden on the orchard side of the house, was all too lovely. As the shadows deepened and the crickets sang more loudly, Susie always felt a strange awe creep over her. Frankie would sometimes lead her way down

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through terrace after terrace, until they reached the little summer house at the end of the grass walk, then she would turn suddenly and hide in the hedge, or in the green house, or among the fruit bushes. Poor Susie would then cry out in fear. Mrs. Gannett would hear her and come down the path to meet her, holding her hand tightly as they went towards the house. Frankie would dash ahead, hide behind trees and shrubs and jump out with a "booh!" then she would fly up the verandah steps to the second story, through the wide hall, up the straight stairs and into the nursery closet to pounce out again and grab her little sister when she entered the room. Susie and Mrs. Gannett always went through the lower hall, and, with a "good-night" to Bridget, Jim and Michael, would start up the long winding stairs. To divert the tired child—she was likely to be cross when she was sleepy—Mrs. Gannett would repeat the old Irish count as she held Susie's hand and slowly began the ascent:

"Onery, twoery, zickery, zan,
Philissy, pholossy, Nicholas, John;
Queeby, quowby, Irish Mary,
Stringle 'em, strangle 'em Buck!"

The last word meant a pause to get breath and to kiss,

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and then they began again: "Onery, twoery,"— How an artist would have revelled to paint a picture of these two! The soft yellow walls, the white stairway, the dark mahogany rail of the long three flights turning 'round and 'round, and at the top the circle of skylight through which moon and stars beamed down.

The tradition was that the builder of the Old Stone House, realizing that there were intervals when his mind was not normal in one of which he had injured his only son, planned the spiral stairway so that by locking the doors upon the landings his wife and child could be in perfect safety when the attacks of mental derangement came upon him. He would pass the days in the large stone wing, which Mr. Faxon used later for a schoolroom, under the care of his man-servant. Mr. Faxon found the spiral stairs a great convenience for the school boys, but he had added the straight stairs at the end of each wide hall so that Mrs. Faxon, the children and guests might go up and down without the danger of hurrying boys passing them, or being kept impatiently waiting behind. After the school was moved to New York, Frankie and Susie preferred the winding stairs. Guests would watch the children in fear and wonder—going up and down the dizzy flights at such a break-neck speed. Frankie would lift her feet

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and slide down on her hands, but this was direct disobedience and not a frequent occurrence. Several times Susie had walked down these stairs in her sleep when Mrs. Gannett had left her—the child had an intuitive sense of loneliness. On this evening Susie went up the straight stairs timidly. She called Mrs. Gannett softly, waiting a moment for the dear voice to reply. How strange! The nursery was empty, and no one on the verandah! She called Frankie, too, but no answer! After looking everywhere on that floor, she thought that Mrs. Gannett might be in Jim's room getting his clothes to mend that evening. She panted up the spiral stairway and hurried into the room only to find it vacant. Susie was in a panic. In her whole life she had never called in vain to Mrs. Gannett. She felt that almost from the grave an answer would come. She peeped into the attic—it was as large as half the house, with a semi-circular window away up in the peak. The moon had risen so that a faint light filtered through the evergreens without and showed her Mrs. Gannett in a low rocking chair, her head bowed in her hands and her elbows resting on her knees. Susie whispered, "Oh, what is it? Is some one dead?" She drew down the arms, kissed the tears from the worn face, and climbed upon her nurse's knee. "Oh, how you scared

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me! I thought I should never find you again. You never hid from me before."

"Little darling, I was mending a carpet up here 'till the light got dim; I wanted to be alone so I could think what's right and what's wrong for me to do. Oh dear, oh dear!" and the tears began afresh.

"O Mrs. Gannett, tell me, is Kathleen found—is she dead?"

"No, no, darling; it's no one dead nor no one sick; it's a letter from my brother that's taken the life out of me. It's home he says I should go, and how could I leave youse all, let alone my own two? And if Kathie ever should be alive and come hunting for her mother and find no one at all, how would I feel if she lost her soul for need of me? Luke—he's my brother—many's the time I've told you of him—there's but the two of us. Luke writes that my poor old father says he'll forgive me all ever I did if I'll but go home now before he dies and without my children. I know it's disobeying him and my mother that's brought me all the trouble that follows me whichever way I turn, and now—should I go home? If Mr. Faxon were only alive—God have mercy on his soul—he'd tell me all that I ought to do!"

"Oh, don't; don't go, Mrs. Gannett; I should die! I

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could never live without you! Who would mend my torn clothes before Mamma saw them? Who would stay in the nursery every evening? Who would stay awake all night so when I wake up and think of robbers I'm not scared? And who would make my lovely milk toast when I'm sick? Oh, don't go!"

Susie was crying so hard that the nurse's tears stopped as she tried to comfort the child and began to tell once more the story of her past—it was most dramatic and furnished an interest in geography to every Faxon child in turn.

Her father had owned his farm, which showed that he was in comfortable circumstances. Mary was a typical Irish beauty: her hair was black, her cheeks rosy, her forehead broad and white, her eyes were of a peculiar almond shape, and her form very slender. A young farmer had been chosen by her parents for her future husband, but she was in no haste to wed. She loved to be free. She had told the Faxon children about the dances on the village green, and the Maypole festivities, until they could see the happy Irish scenes quite clearly. She kept putting off her marriage day, and at last a regiment of soldiers camped near by. One of them, a Robert Gannett, attracted her attention and finally captured her heart. To her he had all the grace

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and charm of a gentleman born and bred, and, dazzled by his songs and uniform, she was soon his adoring slave. She tried to tell her father and brother, but at first they would not listen, and then they would not understand until one night Luke found Mary with her soldier lover and heard the fatal words of marriage from Robert's lips. Luke told his father and, as the sister slipped indoors to hurry to bed, the two men stood before her and, with indignation and shame, told her that the family was disgraced by her listening to one lover when she was going to marry another.

"I can't marry Tom—I hate him! He can't sing, and I want to marry a soldier and see new countries. Robert will take me to America and everything is different there."

"No!" thundered her father. "The banns must be cried in chapel this Sunday, and you shall be kept in your room until your wedding-day!"

In tears Mary went to bed, and long after the father and brother were asleep her mother stole up to kneel by her bedside and shed hot tears of pity, though she knew she could do nothing for her unhappy child.

"I shall die if I marry Tom, mother."

"You will never live if you marry Robert. You would die of remorse. And disobeying your father would

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bring you grief; you can't run away from it. Better never marry at all, but go into a convent as Aunt Anna did."

This her young heart could not think of for a moment. Sunday she went meekly to chapel and heard the banns cried. The next Sunday she had run away with her chosen lover. He was her husband now and they were far at sea. A terrible storm made her heart know its own misery, and she kept saying, "This is because I disobeyed my father. Oh, if only I had not come!"

The ship was damaged by the storm so that the passengers were detained on the island of Fayal several weeks. The poor homesick girl begged to go back on some one of the vessels that touched there on their way to England, but her soldier lover was her master now and laughed at her homesickness. When they reached New York he generously spent upon her all the money he had, then tried to find work. This was difficult, as he had no trade. Mary suggested going out to service. To this Robert objected, but, being unsuccessful himself, was driven to permitting her to take a situation on Washington Square in a fashionable boarding school. Here began a new deception: she had to say that she was unmarried, and she remembered her mother's words, "Sin was added to sin, and sorrow to

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sorrow." The young ladies in the school were very kind to her. They saw that she was homesick and gave her many presents. Some of the maids were good to her and others teased her unmercifully. She blew out the gas and they joked freely about it. She was cook on Sunday night and once boiled a watermelon whole and placed it steaming on the table. In time her fresh young face and merry Irish laugh won the day, and she was almost sorry when Robert came to take her away from her new-found friends. He had secured work miles above on the river in a quarry. His wages were good, and soon they were in a neat cottage and Mary was longing to show her baby boy to her mother. She was proud of him and glad, but was often in tears over her folly and sin. Years passed. Wages were still high, and though her husband drank a little he was kind to her and to the children.

Then came the Civil War. Robert was at heart a soldier, and now an enthusiastic American, and off he went. He had saved some money, but it was soon gone. No word came of Robert's death, and when the regiment returned without him one comrade said he had been card-playing and had won and lost money and was now out in California gold-hunting—he guessed. The poor wife could not believe this, and she had

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asked all who had known her husband, "Where is Robert?" They shook their heads. If they knew they had not the heart to tell her. So she was soon facing starvation. One kind neighbor in Portville kept the four children while she crossed the river to hunt for work. The priest of Davenport was a good man. He had lived in university towns and had had scholars among his friends. When Mrs. Gannett appealed to him he suggested Mr. Faxon as a possible employer, gave Mrs. Gannett a note of introduction, and fortunately Mr. Faxon was at home and at leisure. Under his sympathetic eyes Mary told her whole story, ending, "I disobeyed my father, and now all my mother said is come true."

Mr. Faxon at once engaged her as nurse and then, in his quick enthusiasm, made plans for all her children. He sent the two little boys to a school, the priest helping to raise the necessary money. The oldest son became his errand boy and so remained with his mother. The pretty little daughter was to be trained as a maid for Mrs. Faxon. Mrs. Gannett was perfection as child's nurse. Millicent and Bettina were obedient to her through love. She was all that one could desire in judgment, devotion and capacity. The boys did well at school and, until after Frances and Susie were born,

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life was tranquil and bearable to Mrs. Gannett. She had studied a little Latin and Algebra; she wrote an excellent hand, and often helped the children in their lessons. She sang many of Moore's songs and recited many old English ballads and hymns. She was passionately fond of books, and would listen with joy to Millicent and Bettina when they read aloud for practice while she sewed. When Susie grew older she reviewed her school work with Mrs. Gannett every evening.

One day the eldest son, John, was sent to the bank with a check for a hundred dollars. He came home in tears saying, "O Mother, I have lost the money! I went back and hunted. I lost it in the snow-drift. Some one will find it and keep it! What will become of me? Will Mr. Faxon put me in jail?" Mr. Faxon endeavored to find the money, but it never came to light. In a few days, however, one of the professors told him that three students had been found playing cards for money behind a grocery store where whiskey was sold. The fourth player was an Irish lad who seemed to have plenty of money, which aroused suspicion among his comrades. He worked, they said, for Mr. Faxon. It was a bitter moment for Mrs. Gannett when Mr. Faxon told her in the kindest possible

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way that John must leave his home. "I'm sorry, Mary, but you see he is of no use to me unless I can trust him. My pupils are all rich boys and very careless with their money. This love of playing cards will be a temptation, and I cannot run the risk of keeping him. I will put him in a situation on probation. I will expect him to gradually pay back the one hundred dollars from his wages. I will still befriend him but not under my roof." Mrs. Gannett sobbed her thanks and her heart repeated the old words, 'I disobeyed my father!'

The next shock was in regard to Kathleen. She was dainty of form and face, with high coloring and so imitative that strangers were amazed at her refined intonation and fascinating little mannerisms. She looked the soul of innocence, but the sins of the father soon became apparent. Money, jewels, lace vanished from Mrs. Faxon's guests. A sense of gratitude kept Kathleen from ever taking anything from Mrs. Faxon or the children; the guests she did not love—they were fair prey. Mrs. Faxon was in despair. She hated to send the child from her home, yet she could not keep her in it. At last a warm-hearted friend, Mrs. Hill, offered to take Kathleen to live with her. She felt quite sure, she said, that she could win her trust and loyalty, and she would mould her character anew. After Kath-

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leen went to Mrs. Hill's the mother's eyes were opened and a strange sadness settled upon her face.

One evening late in the summer Mrs. Faxon sat reading. The doors and windows were open. She heard a light step, and, looking up, she saw Mrs. Hill breathless standing in the hall. "What is it? Are the children ill?" "Oh—Mrs. Faxon—Kathleen! She has gone, she has run away! I cannot begin to tell you all that she has taken with her."

"From you, Mrs. Hill, her kind friend? Then there is no hope. How can I ever tell her mother! This painful ending to all our plans!"

"She has taken money," exclaimed Mrs. Hill, "and many valuables—sashes, scarfs, and feathers—everything she could lay her hands on and not too heavy to carry away. What has hurt me more than all is this: she has taken some family jewelry that I told her I valued above all that my house contained."

In real distress they waited for Mr. Faxon that he might decide how to act. It was he who broke the news to the poor mother. New York detectives failed to find the runaway child. She was fourteen at the time—bright and quick and clever. She had been to the public school working for Mrs. Faxon only between sessions. Mr. Faxon told Millicent and Bettina

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that Kathleen's name was never to be mentioned. He wished to prevent gossip and to spare Mrs. Gannett the constant reminder of her disgrace and her loss. The lonely mother's hair whitened rapidly, and her eyes were as of those who look for sails that never come.

A picture hung over the mantel in the nursery; the almond-shaped eyes, the mobile mouth, the low brow and wavy brown hair were very like Kathleen's. As Susie grew older to her alone would Mrs. Gannett point to that picture and tell her that it looked like her darling daughter who was lost. It was years before the children knew how Kathleen had disappeared; to them she was full of romantic interest; Ann, the cook, would begin to speak of her, but Bridget would hush her before the children heard the ending of the sentence.

During the following winter John died of pneumonia. Mr. Faxon, understanding the mother's loneliness, sent for the other sons. He found an excellent situation for Robert in a fine old country place, and John's work was given to Jim. Mrs. Gannett's heart was somewhat comforted. It was about this time that Susie began to sleep in the nursery. She was a dependent, cuddly baby. In spite of her grief over John and

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Kathleen, Mrs. Gannett's tears dried as she rocked and sang to her little lamb. Susie seemed to feel when her old nurse needed comforting; she would put out her dimpled hand and pat the tears if they began to fall. She loved singing, and, strange to say, the sad songs seemed to please her most. As she grew older she loved to have her nurse tell her of her home in Ireland and the pictures of her daily life so unlike her own. Perhaps Susie realized that she was the only one admitted to the inner shrine and prized her power over her nurse's heart. The time came when Mrs. Gannett's mother died. This was the first news that had reached her from her home, although she had written after the birth of every one of her children and after the disappearance of her husband. Susie was all the more surprised to be told that a letter had come from Luke, and she was old enough to realize that to be forgiven was one of the deepest longings of her nurse's heart. As Susie lay in bed at night, behind the dark baize screen, she would often say, "I feel lonely to-night, Mrs. Gannett, and I can't go to sleep. Please say your prayers first so you'll be near me." The nurse would drop her sewing, and, kneeling down by the bed, would begin the half-chanted, monotonous rosary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us

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sinner now—" the words would run together faster and faster and only once in a great while could Susie hear the final prayer to S. Anthony to bring Kathleen back, and to the Virgin for her Father's forgiveness. And now one prayer was answered: her father would take her home if she would go! Susie was in a paroxysm of fear.

Frankie had played a very long time before Mrs. Gannett, with Susie asleep in her arms, came down the long winding stair. But Susie's entire love for her nurse had conquered. The longing for forgiveness could not alter her choice. By the nursery lamp that night Mrs. Gannett wrote her brother that she could not desert Mrs. Faxon who had befriended her and her children when they were in sore need; that not until Rob and Jim were settled in life, and little Susie grown beyond need of her care, could she return to Ireland. Before Mr. Faxon had died he had said to her: "Mary, you will never leave my children as long as they need you?" And she had answered, "No, sir." But at that time to be permitted to live under her father's roof had ceased to be a hope. And now! Whenever Susie saw the faraway look in those dear eyes, or heard the sing-song voice repeating,

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“Oh, that I were where I would be,
Then would I be where I am not;
But where I am, there I must be,
And where I would be I cannot!”

she would jump into her lap and, holding Mrs. Gannett's face between her little pink hands, would plead: “But you know you'd never be happy if you were back again in Ireland. You know you'd worry over Rob and Jim and cry about Kathleen, and then I wouldn't be there to comfort you! If I can't live without you how can you live without me? And if you're sick you've got me, and I'll never stop loving you and you can't go; you know you can't!”

The years that followed one by one brought grief and joy to these two who loved each other, and through it all there ran a golden thread of entire devotion and perfect understanding, and when at last Kathleen did return she found her mother there to welcome and forgive her.

IX

FRANKIE'S PLANS

SUSIE, wake up! Don't speak!" whispered Frankie as she began to drag her sleeping sister out of bed. "I'll help you get your clothes on, but you must be quiet, for if Mrs. Gannett hears us the whole plan is spoiled.

Susie rubbed her eyes and slowly the plan of the night before came clearly to her mind.

"Oh, is it really morning, and can we do it?" asked Susie.

"Hush! Don't you even breathe until we are out in the orchard; then I'll tell you the plan. It's the very best I ever thought of—oh, goody!"

In a trice Susie's clothes were on. Many of the buttons were in the wrong holes, and belt and neck were awry, but these practical details were less than nothing when Frankie's schemes were in the air. She had a wonderful way of making everything sound like a fairy tale, full of mystery and charm, and even though one by one they ended in fatigue and disgust, Susie always believed that "this plan would be fun."

"I'll carry your shoes and mine, too, and we'll go down

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the straight stairs, out on the verandah, by the school room, through the orchard, and then climb the fence, see? Even if Mrs. Gannett is looking out of a window on the front side, she can't see us, and Bridget and Ann can't, either, from the kitchen or pantry. Now, don't I plan beautifully?" whispered Frankie.

"But after we get over the orchard fence, then what?" asked Susie, her eyes half asleep yet and not very full of enthusiasm.

"Don't talk! You'll see, bye-and-bye."

At this hour the house—it was only half after six of a May morning—seemed as large as a cathedral to Susie; the stone terrace seemed many times its own length; and the absence of all voices and footsteps made the child homesick at heart.

The three maids were drinking their tea, or, as they called it, their "doo," in the large pantry on the opposite side of the house. Jim Gannett was so lazy that he was rarely up at this hour unless he wished to steal some especially fine fruit before Frankie got it. The new gardener, Michael, was at work in the greenhouse. The little runaways, therefore, were unobserved as they ran in their stocking feet until they reached the bank. This bank, with spreading evergreens sheltering it, was a fascinating place to the children. The

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stone terrace ended where the trees began, and the bank of cones and pine needles, reaching out to the orchard, was always cool on a warm day and often in winter the light snow storms would blow over it, leaving it dry. The children sat down while Frankie put on Susie's shoes before she put on her own, for she was generous to any one who was submissive to her will. Taking her little sister's hand, Frankie hurried to the extreme corner of the orchard, pushed through the hedge, climbed on the high fence, helping Susie up, and there sat, swinging her feet.

"Now I can speak, Frankie," said Susie, panting. "What are you going to do next? Where's breakfast?"

"Now you wait 'till you see what we'll do. It's the loveliest thing—it has a horse and a man in it, and a place you've never seen."

Susie cried, "There's Patrick!" and in a new coal cart drawn by a strong horse sat a sturdy Irishman with a beaming face and an irresistible voice.

"The top of the morning to ye, Miss Frankie! And did ye's really come? I thought it was joking you was. And the baby's here, too! And whatever did Mrs. Gannett say to your coming out like this so early in the morning?"

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"Oh, she didn't know!" said Susie, "and I better go back and tell her."

"I think you're so mean! Go back and tell her, and make me lose all my fun, when I'm generous enough to drag you up and dress you and let you into my grown-up plans, when you're such a baby! I just wish I'd asked Sadie Hill to meet me here, so there!"

"Frankie, don't be cross, and I'll promise not to go back, but I'm so hungry, and you won't 'splain the plan."

"I'll tell you, Miss Susie," said Patrick, beaming, as he got down from his cart and lifted Susie from the bench, "I've bought a fine new horse, and Miss Frankie wanted to see him and to ride on a coal cart, just to see what it was like. I told her the early morning was the prettiest time for riding, and the likes of her couldn't be seen in a coal cart after the Quality is on the street, so she begged me to show her West Farms, and I never could say 'No' to Miss Frankie. So here yez are!"

Frankie was up in the seat with the reins in her hand, and Patrick lifted Susie to the seat beside her.

"I brought a blanket to soften the seat, but wood is wood and you'll be finding it hard ridin' before we get back, I'm thinkin'."

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Off the cart jogged; it was bright and new and the horse was unusually pretty. Frankie was in transports of joy.

Patrick had been a trained gardener in the old country before he had come to live with Mr. Faxon. His skill and interest had done such wonders to the gardens that they were the despair of his fellow workmen. Jim, under him, did excellent work. Patrick had trained the peaches to grow against the greenhouse wall; he had constructed several summer houses, and, under his hand, the vine grew over them in a most wonderful way. After fifteen years he decided to marry, and Mrs. Faxon, loth to lose him, gave him the use of two rooms when he returned with his bride after their honeymoon. The children had laughed many times at the story of his pouring cheap perfumery upon the bouquets Mrs. Faxon permitted him to make for the bridal party in New York. "Now they'll be sweeter still!" he said in explanation. Two months before he had begun his own housekeeping in a little flat, and now a bright-eyed baby boy had come. Frankie was always begging Mrs. Gannett to take her down there to see his wife, and the baby was an added attraction. Yesterday Frankie had held the baby in her arms, and it was then that Patrick had come in de-

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scribing the beauties of his horse and cart, until Frankie had begged him to let her have a ride with him.

"Don't you ever make him trot?" asked Susie, who was cold and hungry in the chill May air.

"No, Miss Susie. Coal carts aren't like phaetons—they go slow."

"Where are we going?" Susie's voice quivered, for it seemed a most dull and tedious trip.

"A bit over a mile, and we'll be back by breakfast-time, won't we, Miss Frankie?"

They had come to a bridge. Frankie gave the horse a sudden blow with the reins which made him jump, and Susie fell forward and Patrick caught her with both hands, but not before she had been thoroughly frightened.

"I wish you'd drive, Patrick! Frankie'll kill us all," whimpered Susie.

Frankie held on to the reins until the destination of the coal was reached. It was a low red house near a mill. While Patrick unloaded the coal Frankie led the way to the mill stream, and in a moment she had found stones to throw and sticks to sail for boats. She jumped from one big stone to another, and pointed out one stone for Susie to step on. Alas! The stone was round

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—and Susie fell into the water up to her knees. Her favorite pink gingham dress was wet all around the skirt in front.

“Frankie, see!” Susie began to cry.

“The sun will dry that in no time—or I’ll tell you! Go to the miller’s house and sit by the fire. I’ll take you, only don’t tell who you are, for Mamma would not like us to be in a coal cart.”

“But you said the last time she forgave you for mischief, you wouldn’t do queer things again,” replied Susie.

“Oh, well, I’ll tell her some time myself, but I don’t want strangers to know and to tell her—or to tell each other, either.”

Frankie asked the woman who answered their knock if Susie could dry her dress, and after leaving her sister seated by the kitchen stove, she rushed back to the mill stream.

Poor Susie was subjected to many questions: “I wonder who you be. Do tell me! Shy, ain’t you?” No answer. “Did you ever see these farms before?”

“No,” tremblingly.

“I guess you’re a New York girl—Patrick’s niece, maybe. I’ve heard they all dress in New York, and his

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wife's folks are uncommon well off, I hear. Is your name Irish or American?"

Susie was now blushing with chagrin and embarrassment. "Not either of those; it's just a Davenport name, and my mother's a lady and she'll be very angry to hear I was ever in a coal cart, and I shan't tell you what my name is," and with this outburst Susie fled down to the stream. The coal was in the cellar now. Patrick called in his cheery voice, "All ready, childer!"

"Who's children be they, any way?" shouted the woman from the door.

"Oh, I humored 'em and took 'em—picked 'em up on my way. My, but you have a fine mill stream, and, begorrah, I never in the old country saw the like of those trees." More blarney followed until both children were whisked off in the cart and the woman, open-mouthed, watched them down the hill.

"Fooled her!" said Patrick. "O, Miss Susie, what ails you? Are you hurt?"

With one finger Susie pointed to her precious pink gingham. Patrick's hands, fresh from the coal, had touched the wet part of the skirt and oh! the ruin of the beloved dress! Nothing could comfort the chilled and hungry child.

FRANKIE'S PLANS

"I hate your plans! Frankie, I'll never—never—never do a thing you tell me to again! And I'll tell Mrs. Gannett and Mamma and Milly about that horrid woman thinking I'm Irish and don't live in Davenport on Elm Street in our beautiful Old Stone House."

Mrs. Gannett was in great excitement over the children's absence. "Frankie will be the death of her yet—poor little pet! I wish that she'd more sense than to be led by the big one."

Breakfast was nearly over when a strange noise was heard in the hall. "I believe it is the children," said Milly. She slipped to the door and there beheld Susie and Frankie walking on their knees. Frankie was trying to get Susie up to the nursery to change her dress before any one saw her. Milly put her arms around Susie and in a few moments the whole story was told. "Oh, dear, I'm so hungry, but I suppose I must get clean first, and then may I eat before I'm punished? Shall I be in bed all day?" Mrs. Faxon was now standing in the hall, too. She felt like smiling at Susie's appearance. The coal dust and tears covered her face and hands as well as her dress.

"Susie, I must keep you in bed for an hour," said Mrs. Faxon, "but Frankie must have a severer punishment. It was all her idea, I know. I wish some les-

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son could make her dutiful and obedient. Patrick was always so fond of Frankie. I suppose his Irish heart could not say 'no' to any foolish wish she might express."

Frankie owned that she did hate the idea of the mill woman's knowing her name; she must have been doing wrong or she would not have cared. "I'll promise, Mamma, to try not to think of any more plans, but when they come into my head at night I feel as if I should burst if I don't do them the first thing in the morning. Oh, dear! why didn't I have a brother, then he would have thought of all the things first, and I would have all of the fun and none of the blame?"

"As it is now," said Milly, "if there's any fun you certainly have it, and the blame never keeps you from doing the next piece of mischief."

X

THE RUNAWAY

"I SHALL not change my mind," said Millicent, who could be very firm with all her sweetness. "I don't care to drive this afternoon, for I never feel safe with that old horse Charlie. You might take the children if your aunt is expecting you."

Allen King looked his disappointment, but he did not know how to urge this or any other suit, as his unsuccessful wooing of Millicent proved.

The children were so often taken rowing and driving to prevent tete-a-tete expeditions that to-day they stood eagerly by, sure of an invitation.

"Frankie," said Allen King, "you always want to go. I'll let you drive until we reach the bridge, and, Susie, you'll come, too. We have fine cherries on that famous tree this year, and after supper it will not be too dark to gather a basket of them."

"Let me kiss Mrs. Gannett good-bye and tell her I'll bring her cherries, and then I'll come," said Susie.

Allen King had been a pupil in the Faxon school years before it was moved to New York. After that followed his course at Yale, and three years at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. At this time he

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was interne in the Presbyterian Hospital. As his home was far away the greater part of his vacations was spent with the Faxons. At the tender age of fourteen he had declared that he would marry Milly or remain single. He had not altered this decision, as every one knew—and teasing was a steady ordeal.

But Frankie was the most successful tease and made life full of the unexpected for him. She would say eagerly, "Oh, Allen, I heard Milly say something so interesting about you the other day. Wouldn't you love to know what it was?"

After much coaxing and the promise of a new doll if Frankie would only tell the 'something,' she would laughingly sing out, "Oh, Milly said that she did wish you weren't so terribly short and such a slow-poke!" Being of a very scientific and simple nature Allen continued to be credulous. Susie tried once to get something she wanted by the same method, but ended by saying, "Milly never will like you, so why don't you try to think some one else is nice?"

Allen King had tried Mrs. Faxon's patience more than once. He came up from college when he was ill with measles and Mrs. Faxon had to keep him under her roof. He was quarantined, as not one of the children had had the disease. One day he felt lonely and,

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hearing Frankie in the hall, called her to come in to him, promising her candy if she would help to amuse him. Mrs. Gannett discovered that Susie, too, had been coaxed into the room, for she said one night: "If I did have measles would I look as puffy and red and homely as Allen King? And would you still love me enough to bring me milk toast?"

"How did you see him, Susie?"

"Frankie said I was a coward not to go in, and mean, too, so I went just once and sat on his bed." Strange to say no one contracted the disease.

At another time Allen was interested in chemistry experiments. He had innumerable small bottles which he used for mixing acids. Needing aid in this work he bought Frankie's time and help by giving her several analine dyes. Many articles, precious to Milly, Bettina and Susie, were offered on the altar of this dyeing mania.

One day he asked Frankie if she would like to rub her arm with poison ivy, as he was rubbing his, so that he could write a paper on the difference between the infection of a child and an adult. Frankie delighted to do anything out of the ordinary, especially in the company of a grown-up, so the ivy did its work and Mrs. Faxon's indignation was as deep as Mrs. Gannett's, if not so violently expressed.

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On this perfect June afternoon, the children on either side of Dr. Allen King in a high runabout, started on their two-mile drive. The railroad bridge ran over a very steep road; it was a dangerous place, as the road curved suddenly under the bridge. Frankie teased to keep the reins "just a little longer" until the whistle shrieked, the train was in sight, and then Dr. King snatched the reins and tried to pull in old, determined Charlie. Allen was always slow in his motions and in no sense an athlete.

Charlie felt the weakness of the hands that tried to hold him, and with a sudden plunge he snapped the traces and dashed on towards his home.

Where were Frankie and Susie? Where, indeed? Only the doctor happened to fall in so fortunate a manner that the cushion of the seat was under him. On one side of the road lay Frankie. She had fallen against a pile of stones, left from the newly made bridge, and her cheek was badly cut. Susie was less seriously hurt, for only gravel and road stones had scraped her knee; it was painful, however, and blood ran all over her leg. Susie tried to bind it up with her skirt. She sat there crying hard, her face covered with tears, blood and dirt. She was a sorry spectacle.

"Oh, Allen, carry me home! Where's Frankie? Oh,

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do stop this hurt on my knee! You're a doctor—do something quick!"

Allen King was an unexcitable person, and just now was in a state of apparent torpor. He slowly answered, "I can do nothing until I find my glasses!" The children did not realize that he was almost blind without them. Frankie was brave and not easily made faint, as Susie and Milly were, by the sight of blood. She felt that action was imperative and sprang toward Dr. King. He was carefully searching under the overturned carriage and in every roadside bush for his glasses.

"I think you're mean! You're just horrid! How can you care about your old glasses? How much did they cost, any way? The idea! My little sister with her knee all cut and you fussing about your glasses—I don't care what I say. I'm just as mad as mad! I'll tell Milly just how horrid you are and she'll never marry you, so there! You fell on the cushion, and you're a man and let us little children get all cut up. And now you won't even look at my cheek to see whether my eye is cut out, nor at Susie all covered with blood! You poor darling!" Frankie grabbed off the wide ribbon of her hat and, kneeling down, made a firm bandage of it around Susie's knee. "Susie, dear, let me get this all

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wrapped up so it can't bleed any more. I'll give you my little writing desk that you love so if you won't cry while I fix it for you. Don't speak to Allen King! Don't look at him! He doesn't care a bit!"

Susie let Frankie do up her knee, but when she saw the blood coming through and spoiling the pretty flowered ribbon, her tears began afresh.

"Oh, don't cry, Susie—don't, please! I can't stand it if you cry." Susie stopped once more, and then caught sight of the white bone showing in the cut cheek. The handkerchief Frankie had tied over her face had blown off, and the wound gaped in a frightening way. Susie began again her torrent of tears and abuse, in righteous indignation at Allen King.

"How can you poke around for your glasses, when you've never looked at Frankie's cheek, and the bone's all out and it's awful! And her eye's out, maybe! Oh, if Mrs. Gannett were only here!"

"Never mind, Susie, if Mr. Carter or Mr. Wainwright, or any of Milly's real friends were here they'd take care of us. I just hate you, Allen King, and I don't want any presents from you ever again!"

By this time the doctor had found his glasses, but, alas!—one glass was broken! With moderate steps he approached the children and said, "My glasses are

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broken so I cannot make a proper examination. You children sit quietly here. I will go after the horse. No harm must come to him, for my aunt values him highly. I will catch him and ride him back, and then we can drive home together."

Both children cried, "Drive back with that horse, and with you? Never!"

Frankie helped Susie to stand up, saying: "If I were only big I would carry you home."

"I wouldn't let you if you could, with your poor cut cheek; it's lots worse than my knee, I know."

"Allen King ought to carry you home, Susie. How Milly will feel about this! Now try to walk. You can rest every little while."

As they passed through two of the finest streets of Davenport they felt as if hundreds of eyes were burning into them. Several friends tried to make them stop until a carriage could be made ready to take them home; but Susie cried all the harder: "Oh, don't make me stop a minute! I must get home before night! I must see Mrs. Gannett!" One thoughtful lady sent her boy to Dr. Pemberton's office to ask the doctor to go to Mrs. Faxon's immediately.

Milly sat on the wide stone portico reading. She did not see the children until Susie screamed in her joy to

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be at home again. Milly's book was then thrown on the grass, and into her arms she took her poor little sister.

"Oh, Milly, I'll get blood and tears all over your fresh white dress! Don't hug me now!" But Milly was thoroughly frightened and asked, "What has happened? Did that old horse run away? And here's Frankie! And where is Allen King?"

Mrs. Gannett heard Milly's cry and was down in a moment. Bridget rushed up from the pantry, and Bettina came from the back verandah. The latter expressed herself most volubly: "What a goose Allen King is! To care about his glasses and the old horse in comparison with cuts like these! I shall never forgive him!" But of course she did.

"Musha," said Bridget, "it's from a case of downright murder you look as if you'd come! And him a doctor! God pity the people that ever depend on him!" Mrs. Gannett was hurrying for bowls and bandages when Dr. Pemberton drove up.

"How did this angel of a man come without being sent for? I sent Mike the minute I heard Miss Milly scream," said Bridget.

The doctor's skillful hands worked gently and rapidly. Poor Frankie's cheek had to be sewed. She was very

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brave during the ordeal, but Susie fainted at the sight of the stitches. Frankie felt a gray mist coming before her eyes, and she lay back in Bridget's arms insensible. At that moment Mrs. Faxon appeared. She was surprised to see the doctor's carriage at the gate. Her amazement increased as she reached the living room. When the children's eyes were open and they were able to tell the details of the accident to their mother, she exclaimed: "Think of my children walking through Park Street and Elm Street at four o'clock in the afternoon in such a condition! What will they think, and what did they say, Frankie?"

"I didn't answer some of them," Frankie replied. "'Allen King has gone to find the runaway horse' is all I said.

Milly and Bettina gave the children each a coveted treasure, and on the verandah benches, propped up with pillows, they ate their supper in state. In the evening Dr. King rang the bell. Bridget's reception of him was not exactly genial.

"Where is Miss Millicent?" he asked.

"It's with her little crying sisters she was, but now she may be in the library." Milly was writing to a friend all about the runaway. She looked up with a certain something in her eyes which did not add to Allen's sense of comfort.

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"I hope that your precious horse is returned to your aunt, and your precious glasses safe at the optician's."

"Millicent, how hard your voice sounds! What have I done to offend you? I couldn't examine any wound properly without my glasses, and I couldn't let another person's horse escape. I had hoped to go back to my work with your promise to marry me this time."

"You ask me to love you! You can't even dimly imagine how sisters can love each other. You left my little sisters—mine, whom you say you love as well as you could your own—left them in pain and fright; you, a man! You, a doctor! Oh, Allen, you have been tried in the balance and have been found wanting!" She rose to leave the room. He tried to follow her, but with one hand she motioned him away. In a few moments she was crying softly to herself, lying across her bed in the moonlight.

Frankie's face never lost its scar; Susie's knee was stiff for weeks, but it was impossible for the children to harbor their resentment very long and Milly's and Bettina's hearts melted under the beams of Allen King's daily kindnesses. It was a week after that Dr. King sat down near Millicent on the verandah bench, looking at Susie and Frankie, but meaning every word for the ears of the eldest sister.

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"This is just the day for a picnic," he said, with contagious enthusiasm. "Who will join me in an all-day exploration of some fascinating woods?"

"You can't make any one ever want to go behind Charlie again," said Susie, putting her hand to her knee.

"Charlie!" replied Dr. King. "Who mentioned a horse? This all-day excursion of mine is to be on the river. There is a beach with shining sand, and a steep hill with pine trees behind it. If several good oarsmen go, we can easily have three hours there for exploration. I want to hunt for botanical specimens. Oh, for four bright eyes to help me!"

"I'd love that," cried Frankie as she eagerly rose and stood beside Allen. "You and I can go anyway, and if the others don't go, they'll wish they had."

"If I may take my doll, I'll go, too," said Susie; "and I wish Jim Gannett could row, for he makes the boat spin."

Bettina now joined the group. "Oh, I say two boats; it's such fun racing. Milly, you write the notes and Jim can take them while we talk to Bridget about the lunch."

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Milly's face was a little overcast, but a heart so sweet as her's could not withstand the steady pleading of Allen's eyes, and with an embarrassed little laugh, "Yes," she answered, "I'll go on *one* condition—has Dr. King *two* pairs of glasses?"

XI

POOR AUNT MARY

IT WAS a bleak day in February when Bridget came to Mrs. Faxon with a distressed look upon her face. "Can I help you in any way, Bridget?" This was always the first thought in the mind of the kind mistress.

"Well, ma'am, indeed I hate to trouble you again so soon, for 'twas only last week it was bothered to death you were about my brother Tom, and now it's me poor Aunt Mary I'm breaking my heart over."

"Is she ill, Bridget?"

"Ill. That's a small part of all the trouble that's come to her. I told you long ago how the bit of property she'd earned with her own hands and her husband's—me poor Uncle Tim, God rest his soul—is going from her by inches. It's Neddy Barr who's taken it bit by bit. First 'twas 'Could he larn a thrade and depend on her for his clothes?' She always gave him house and food. And then 'twas, 'O dear Aunt Mary, before I'm through with me thrade I want to marry a girl that'll do so much work for you you won't know how you lived without her at all at all.' So he married a slip of

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girl just out of school, and that helpless 'twould make you sick watchin' her tryin' to work. Then 'twas the baby, and more and more, until now he's got his thrade and earns good money he says there's no room for poor Aunt Mary in her own house—mind you—and he's got a lawyer to get a doctor to say she's losin' her mind, so anyway Neddy holds the papers, and the house is his and the cow and the meadow and all. An' he's taken her to the poorhouse—my father's own sister—God have mercy on his soul, he'll turn in his grave, he will. Oh dear! oh dear!"

"Bridget, sit down. Don't cry so hard! We'll see whether something can't be done. I will send for Judge Hill. You know how kind he always is to you. Dr. Pemberton must meet him here. Mike can drive over for poor Aunt Mary, and I'm sure these wise men can undo all that those unprincipled men have accomplished, and get the property into Aunt Mary's hands again."

"But, Mrs. Faxon, it's all worked so on the poor creature's mind that by now I'm afraid she is a bit crazy-like, and that's the truth. It's her heart broke first and her head after. If you could see her rocking and moanin', 'Ah, Neddie, I took ye before ye cud speak, an' I promised your dyin' mother before the

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priest I'd be ~~like~~ a mother to ye, an' now look at me where I am—in the poorhouse. Ah, Neddie, don't look at me like that! I'm not out of my head, I tell ye. Don't bring in the doctor. Don't tell all the children it's crazy I am, or you'll make me crazy, I tell ye.' Then she'll look up of a sudden and say, 'O Tim, back you've come to take me away from the poorhouse; none of our name was ever there.' She will not eat and she will not go to bed unless they make her. If you waited for doctors and lawyers—the time they take—she'd be dead and buried from the poorhouse. Think of it! A funeral from the poorhouse—God help the poor soul—and those that be living—to bear it!"

"Bridget, all this is very distressing. I wish I knew just how to help you. Would she board with some old friend of her own or yours?"

"Indeed, ma'am, I'm the only one she seems to know, and when she's flighty-like I can quiet her——" Her sentence was interrupted by Frankie's suddenly springing to her mother's side, crying, "Oh, Mamma, I know! Let us take her, oh do! It's cruel to keep her away from Bridget, the only person she cares for. Please say 'yes!'"

No one had seen the child standing by the big French bed, her face growing more eager at each new part of

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the story. It was unusual to have her quiet a moment. "Frankie, that is impossible; there is no place for the poor old woman; she's eighty-eight, I think you said, Bridget; she cannot walk upstairs; her sight is failing. Where could we put her? How could Bridget get through her work and look after her, too?"

"O Mamma, I planned it all while you were talking. I know Papa would take her here. You know we never use the billiard-room in winter, and 'way in one end we could hang a curtain as we do for plays, and there are lots of beds and bureaus and washstands up in the attic, and Susie and I could take her meals to her, and Bridget could help her night and morning. So it's all planned, isn't it, Bridget?" Frankie's arms were around her neck as she sprang up, adding: "Now, don't be sad, Bridget, for Aunt Mary shan't stay in the poorhouse; Mike can go right over now in the buggy and get her; can't he, Mamma?"

Mrs. Faxon was thinking, as Frankie's tongue ran on so eagerly, of Bridget's long life of sacrifice to all whom she had loved, and of her years of service and devotion to the Faxon family. Her heart softened as each epoch of Bridget's life came clearly before her. Bridget had been with the Faxons since she was sixteen, and even then her one hope was to enter a con-

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vent, but she had promised her mother to wait for two years until she was sure of her own mind. At eighteen she was all aglow at the prospect of a conventual life, but her father became suddenly ill and her mother needed her help nursing him until his death. Again the mother begged Bridget to postpone taking the veil for still another year. Father McNeil and Mr. Faxon assured her that this was her duty, for by living with Mr. Faxon she could go over in the evening to help her mother to make the home comfortable for the brothers. The priest secured from the archbishop the permission for her to wait a year longer than was commonly allowed. After months of lingering pain her mother died. And, as one brother was on the eve of marrying, she hoped her other brother would be content to live with him, leaving her free to enter the professed life. The promised bride, however, showed no grief at the mother's death, and quick-tempered Tom "threw her over." (And then began to drink.) Mr. Faxon, through all Bridget's trial of faith, had been her friend and comforter. At Christmas and Easter he always gave her a Roman Catholic Bible, a Prayer Book, or the picture of a saint, and she could never be made to say that all Protestants were to be numbered with the lost. "He's the best man I ever knew, and a

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Christian gentleman, and he couldn't be better—not if he was the priest himself.” George O'Toole, a good-hearted young Irishman, was at this time a groom at the Faxons, and was determined to marry Bridget. He would sing in a captivating rich baritone:

*“So, I won't be a nun; no, I won't be a nun!”
Isn't it a pity such a pretty girl as I
Should be sent into a nunnery to pine away and die?
So, I won't be a nun; no, I won't be a nun!”*

Susie sang this song with great emphasis in baby-talk, and when Bridget heard her she would say, “It's into a nun I'd like to make you, my little Pet.” But no teasing or persuasion could shake Bridget's determination to enter the convent. Mr. Faxon had many a long talk with her, telling her how rich and full life could be doing the simple duties which all homemaking implies, but he saw that her heart was fixed and he ceased to plead George's suit. At last the years of sacrifice bore her beyond the allotted age for entering the convent, and it seemed then as if a light went out of her eyes. Mrs. Faxon recalled all the nights of watching Bridget had given, as one after another in the family was ill. In those days trained nurses were unknown in Davenport, and Dr. Pemberton would often say, “Let me have Bridget for the night nursing and I feel sure that

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the best is being done." The long, weary weeks of Mr. Faxon's illness passed as gray ghosts before Mrs. Faxon's mind. She remembered the first night he had come home to find a merry crowd in the midst of a "candy pull," and Bridget was the only one who realized that he was seriously ill. At times of his delirium her voice alone could quiet the dear master, and though for a part of every night for eight weeks she had shared the nursing, she could never be made to own that she was tired, but kept on her daily rounds, her jokes with the children readier than ever. Thoughts do not take long to travel in quick succession through the mind, and when Mrs. Faxon looked up it was to say: "Your poor Aunt Mary shall come, and this very afternoon, Bridget, and I'll write a note to the matron at once, and Michael shall take it over to the poorhouse and bring Aunt Mary back. You may get Jim to prepare the billiard-room. Mr. Faxon, I know, would think that I am doing right. Your own fidelity, Bridget, makes it impossible for me to see you suffer and not to try to soften it to you."

"Oh, ma'am, God bless you! and have mercy on your generous soul!" said Bridget, as Frankie was pulling at her hand. "Oh, goodie, Bridget! Come on, up in the attic first. Oh, it's such fun! I just love anything

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like this, fixing up rooms and then to see any one so old and from the poorhouse. She'll tell us all sorts of things they do there, and then if she's out of her head she may see visions the way Bible people did. Oh, I'm so excited; do come! And Bridget, don't tell Bettina—she's so proper—she'll say we can't even go in to see Aunt Mary. I think it's just like starting a hospital; I'd love to be a nurse some time, and I'll practice on Aunt Mary: I'll make her eat, and I'll read to her and sing to her and do her hair, and she'll be just like a little old doll. Oh, I'm so glad!" She dragged Bridget away before Susie or Mrs. Gannett knew the great secret. The end of the billiard-room was comfortably arranged and Frankie had taken a Dresden vase from the parlor, to use for flowers for Aunt Mary. So many toilet articles were purloined from the guestroom that two trips had to be made to take them back, when Mrs. Faxon inspected the room just as poor Aunt Mary drove through the gate. Susie was afraid of the little mite of a woman, all crouched over, with an old-fashioned frilled cap, showing only an inch of her hair. Her dim blue eyes seemed to see other countries than our own. She was in a state of distrust and fear, but Bridget's hearty welcome and contagious laugh made her face soften. Seated in a low rocker,

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with Frankie holding a tray of hot tea and toast (Frankie had made the tea herself, and the toast she had burned black on the edges, and then buttered it so generously that most of the black didn't show. "She can't see much, so black's nothing, and I believe burnt toast is better than poorhouse food. Besides, when I made it, of course, she'll think it's delicious"). Aunt Mary began to look almost comfortable.

Several weeks passed before timid little Susie went near Aunt Mary. She would peek through the door at her. "But," she explained, when Frankie tried to drag her in, "she may think I'm one of those horrid people at the poorhouse, or Neddie Barr, and begin to scold me or to cry."

At last she was induced to go in with Frankie and help carry the meals. Frankie's heart remained deeply interested in poor Aunt Mary, and she was never too busy or too tired to do all that she had promised.

Mrs. Faxon's friends were amazed at this new phase of Faxon quixotic devotion to old servants, and she was blamed and praised in turn.

The bright sun of February shone through the windows at the south into Aunt Mary's room, where she rocked in its welcome warmth. As the flowers began to come the children plucked them by ones and twos and

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brought little sprigs of green leaves to the old soul. Susie saved all her best flowers for Mrs. Gannett. "She might think I loved Aunt Mary best if I gave them to her, for I've always kept Mrs. Gannett's Virgin vase full of flowers when spring came." There was a shelf in the nursery where a crucifix stood, and on one side a picture of the Virgin, and on the other one of S. Joseph. Vases were before each picture. Susie had given her nurse the one she called the "Virgin vase;" it was blue and she loved to keep flowers in it. S. Joseph never appealed to her so much, so his vase was empty save when flowers bloomed in great profusion. She always tried to put either blue or white, violet or pink flowers in the Virgin vase, but S. Joseph often had yellow and red and orange stuck into his. "Violet is for the Virgin, and that's blue and pink and white mixed, so I'll never make her have yellow, for I know she hates it." Aunt Mary did not need Susie's devotion; Frankie was ever mindful and Bridget was seldom away.

The old woman loved music, and, one night, when Bettina was playing her violin, Frankie went down to hand Aunt Mary a drink of water, and when Frankie spoke, she could not make her answer. The light from the hall shone into the room, and the moonbeams, also,

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slanted in. Aunt Mary was nowhere to be seen. Frankie went into the kitchen to get Bridget, and together they searched the room, and away under the corner of the bed they found the poor little old woman. "What are you lookin' for at all at all?" asked Bridget.

"Oh, the fiddlers have come, and Tim is waiting for me to lead me to the dance, and wherever are my shoes? It's lost they are!"

The violin struck a chord in some corner of her mind, and it was hard to make her give up the dance and go to sleep.

Another day she asked, as Frankie carried in her cup of tea, "Where is it all the crowds are going to? Is it a wedding or a wake, or it is S. Patrick's Day it is?" She pointed to the trees beyond the lily and fern garden.

"If it rains they'll all go home," answered Frankie, for she never contradicted Aunt Mary.

As the sun shone brightly and the air softened with advancing spring, Frankie had all sorts of plans for giving Aunt Mary a happy May Day. Frankie knew how dear all such days were to Irish people. Mr. Faxon had always fostered the keeping up of all English and Irish customs. A shamrock that Patrick

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brought from Ireland was tended with the greatest care in the greenhouse, and was given among the servants and their Irish friends. On Shrove Tuesday the pancakes were a never-forgotten delight to the children. They gave up cake and candy during Lent, which made each Sunday a feast day, and on Easter even the dolls had small cakes and pigeon eggs in celebration. When Good Friday came the hot cross buns were served on the dolls' table, too, and Mrs. Gannett said, when criticism was offered, "What can you do with children like these? Susie will get up of a cold night to cover her dolls in their beds, and she loves them as if they had souls, and no wonder she treats them the same as if they were her living, breathing children. These must be Christian dolls, if there ever was any such thing."

May Day was one of the "favoritest" days. The high pole was set up by Michael, the flowers were picked the day before and made into bouquets and long festoons for the May pole. They were kept fresh in huge tubs of water all night, and at dawn Frankie and Bridget were busy over the decorations. The pole was set in an open space on the north side of the house, and the children sat on the stone steps leading to the laundry wing, with a mass of flowers about them. Frankie

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was tying flowers as she said, "This May Day must be the most wonderful Aunt Mary has ever seen; she must believe she's way back in Ireland."

A week before Frankie was up and heard a noise down in the kitchen (she often set the table for breakfast to surprise Bridget, who paid her in liberal donations of cake), and, stepping quickly in, she saw little Aunt Mary seated before the stove, her hands shaking with cold and her feet on the fireless grate, her bonnet on and a black shawl crossed upon her breast. "Why, what are you up for, Aunt Mary?" asked Frankie.

"I started to put flowers on Tim's grave, but I couldn't find it, so back I've come."

Frankie ran for Bridget, and together they led her back to her room and put her comfortably into bed. She kept saying: "It ought to be May Day, but it's winter it is, and how cold I am, and I couldn't find Tim's grave!"

The exertion and chill were more than the old woman could bear, and in a few days the weary soul was beyond Frankie's power to entertain her, or the need of Mrs. Faxon's home.

On May Day Aunt Mary must be buried, and Frankie said: "Now we don't care anything about the flowers for the May pole because poor old Aunt Mary won't

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see it, so she can have every one for her funeral."

Bettina lived in the upper air where music, painting and reading took, every one, their turn. She had rarely seen Aunt Mary, and disapproved of Frankie's interest in her. Millicent, too, was busy, and so it was only the children who felt any change in the household by the advent of the poor old woman or the fact that she had gone.

Frankie and Susie gave up their May Day plans with a very sweet spirit and worked hard tying up the flowers. May Day broke in all the glory that sun and sky and perfect air could bring. Frankie and Susie rose very early, and could hardly believe that they themselves had made that pile of wreaths and tastefully arranged bouquets.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Susie. "Has Bridget seen them?"

"No, not yet; and don't touch one. She's to see them all at once so it will be more of a surprise. Just think, even Patrick went away out into the country to get me some flowers from the woods."

Bridget was deeply touched by this labor of love and sacrifice; she promised Frankie she would arrange them all with the greatest care, and was sorry that Frankie herself could not see them after they were

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placed around Aunt Mary's casket. Mrs. Hill had arranged to have the children pass the day at Sadie Hill's, and though Frankie had tried to shorten it by many daring deeds and many mischievous acts, it seemed endless. At last it was night and the children were back again in the nursery and had begun to undress. Mrs. Faxon called: "Mary, I need you for a moment," and Mrs. Gannett left the room. In a trice Frankie seized Susie's hand—their shoes were off—and led her downstairs before Susie realized where she was going. There was only a dim light in the basement hall, and around a turn in the hall Susie was pulled until she found herself in a room full of people. Some were praying, others crying, some moaned softly, and in the midst was a glimmer of candle flame, and the shine of silver and polished wood. Black folds seemed under it, and yet all around there were masses of flowers that she had helped to pick and tie up. And that must be a coffin, and this all was the wake that she had heard so many times about, and always with such terror. Bridget silently drew them away and motioned to the mourners to be very quiet. "But," said Frankie, "I saw one man with a glass, and it looked like lemonade, and I saw cake, too. Why can't we have some? Poor Aunt Mary would love us to have some of it—it's her last party."

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"And who has a better right? Indeed you shall have all you can eat and drink!" Saying this, Bridget put the children on the stairs where Mrs. Gannett found them. "Musha, Frankie! I didn't think you'd go to the wake, nor take little Susie when you knew your mother didn't allow you near the place these two days."

"Well, I think it's very queer when I cared so much for poor Aunt Mary, and tied up all those flowers, that I couldn't even see how they looked. And what is there, anyway, to scare us? Only the silver and the candles, and it's just a service for Aunt Mary, for she isn't there; she's where she can see us all now and is glad Susie and I saw our flowers and ate her cake, so don't scold another word. Grownup people don't know how children feel. It's twice as sensible to see it all than to lie awake all night wondering what they're doing, isn't it, Susie?"

"I'm sleepy and I didn't want to go to see it at all, but I'm glad that Aunt Mary didn't get any older nor any blinder nor any more wandering in her head. I know she's very thankful to get her new, fresh body, and to feel young and spry again. Don't you think so, Mrs. Gannett?"

"God knows whether it's a body she's got at all yet,

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but say your prayers, my darling, and ask God to rest the poor old soul and to make us all as good and as patient as she was, God bless her!"

When the small funeral train passed out of the back gate, the children watched it from the side windows. A neighbor who happened to call at crucial moments and was always generous with her opinion and advice, said to Mrs. Faxon: "Don't you regret now your lack of forethought in letting that old Irish woman come to die in your house? Hasn't it been very harrowing to the children's nerves?"

"Mrs. Gannett says that they have slept perfectly the last two nights." Mrs. Faxon replied serenely, "although Frankie did rise very early to make wreaths; but it was May Day, you know, and she has always been up with the birds on May Day—generally for self-indulgent reasons—but this time her heart was moved in a good cause. Ever since poor Aunt Mary came she has had an outlet for her energies. I cannot recall one mischievous performance in all these weeks. She has never remembered anything so regularly in her whole life as taking in Aunt Mary's breakfast. I think that I have my reward in all the unselfish acts that she has done. The children's hearts have been softened and Bridget's spirit soothed. I feel

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that in doing for one of these least, I have received far more than I have given. I cannot order my life on what may happen if I do what my heart prompts, but I usually find that the actions which in the end win my deepest self-approval have been done by the loving suggestion of a little child."

XII

SUSIE IN DISGRACE

“**N**O, I won’t even for you, Milly; it is too hot to go away up to Sadie Hill’s again!”

“But, Susie,” said Milly, rather crossly for her, “little girls love to be out in the sun. You can run and play in the orchard all day and never think of staying in the house because of heat. This note must go, and it’s so unlike you to make Frankie go alone. You know this is the nicest party I’ve planned this year, and you ought to want to make it a success.”

“Well, I won’t take it! Get Jim to do it.”

“He is helping Mike get bouquets for the table and flowers for the serenaders, besides carrying the large pots from the greenhouse to decorate the lower verandah. You are the only one to go, and if you won’t you shan’t have any of the chicken-and-waffle supper, nor the strawberries and ice cream that will be served in the evening. I never knew you to be so selfish.”

“I think you’re horrid to your little sister, and I don’t care a pin about your old party!” was the angry reply.

“You naughty child, you’ll be sorry! Frankie!” Milly called, “if you will go alone to Alice Hill’s I’ll get

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Mamma to let you sit up at the table and come down to the musicale in the evening. Now, aren't you glad you're willing to go twice in the hot sun for me?"

Off Frankie flew triumphant. She was seldom in high favor—it was intoxicating.

Susie would not cry before Millicent, but waited until she found Mrs. Gannett. "Milly was never so cross to me before," she sobbed, "and was it fair to send one note and then, just as we got back, before our hats were off, or we'd had a breath or a drink or anything, to send us right back to the very same house with another note to the very same person just because she forgot something?" Then followed a tale of the disgrace she was in.

"Well, Susie darling, I know Miss Milly's all tired out. What with the goings on at the college, and the extra ones to every meal in the world, and this big crowd here to-night, she's near sick or she wouldn't be cross to you nor to any other soul alive—she's that sweet. But she had to send the note to tell Miss Alice to stay here all night to hear the serenade the Glee Club's going to give her. If she'd explained first and let you get cooled off, you'd have gone with all your heart. Oh, why must there always be such ructions at this old Commencement time, anyway? Now, Susie,

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don't you cry, for in my old Irish head is a plan and you'll have the best time you ever had in your life. Dry your eyes, there's my pet!"

Susie felt her dethronement deeply. Frankie's superior air was provoking, but Susie tried to get through the day as well as she could. Millicent so seldom did anything but beg to have the children not punished that Mrs. Faxon was convinced Susie's punishment was entirely deserved.

At six o'clock Susie had tasted a little of her bread-and-milk supper; Mrs. Gannett whispered to her to keep a corner of her stomach empty, and her tray went back to the kitchen. At half-after-six she sat up in bed in her nightgown hearing Milly's friends laughing as they went downstairs. She longed to see their pretty gowns so that she could copy them for her paper dolls. Frankie had flaunted by the door triumphant, swinging her fluffy skirts and sash. Then Susie heard the chairs put back and the clatter of knives and forks begin. Could she keep the tears back? Suddenly she heard a whisper: "Susie darling, get on your slippers and gown and see what I have for you." In a moment Mrs. Gannett led Susie to the upper verandah; how lovely it was in that soft June air! The verandah was twelve feet wide and fifty feet long,

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with a railing on which rested pots of flowers. The tall evergreens reached away up beyond, and a branch or two leaned over the verandah. One of Susie's "darlingest" kittens had been lost one night and Susie could not go to sleep because it was out in the cold—this was in the early spring—Susie heard the mewing and ran out on the verandah. There the kitten was high in the tree and too timid to come down! Mrs. Gannett got a long broom, and, steadying it on the rail, as she held the branch down, she watched the frightened little Nellie come safe to her owner's arms. Susie had cheered her all the way by saying: "Come, you dear pussy; it's all safe! Susie'll get you cream to lap by the nursery fire." How Nellie purred in Susie's lap, as the child sat crosslegged before the fire, saying: "Dear little beating heart! Hush little beating heart!" Mrs. Gannett loved Susie's devotion to her cats, and often said: "A child who never forgets her kittens and her dolls will never forget her children, that's sure."

To-night there was no kitten on the verandah, but instead the loveliest of surprises—a high stool with a napkin on it, a plate, a knife, a spoon and bib, and a silver mug of water, and, in the center, a round covered dish smoking with appetizing odor. A little chair

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just the right height was before it. Susie started to squeal with joy. "Musha, darling, not a word out of you! The madame and Miss Milly will be glad to-morrow when they know all I did, but not a whisper of it to-night! Now lift the cover and see!"

Susie looked. There lay two of the brownest waffles and a piece of the tenderest chicken. "O, Mrs. Gannett, how delicious!"

"Now you see, darling, how I saved the very best for you, but I must run back, for I am waiting on the table to help Bridget out. I'll bring you up two hot ones at the very end, so eat these right away before they chill."

Susie sat there in quiet enjoyment of the feast. It was the longest day of the year and the crickets had not yet begun their chirping. The birds sang their sweet evening songs in the orchard. The green terraces and paths of the garden looked like glittering emeralds in the sun's slant rays. Far away the Connecticut River melted into the hills like lakes, and the soft blue mountains beyond touched the darker blue and yellow of the sky. Susie never forgot that evening. She heard the merry laughter now with no heartache. She was remembered and loved. What matter if she could not wear her Roman sash! As the last morsel was swal-

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lowed the old nurse hurried up the stairs. Often in Susie's after life she marvelled at the miles of stairs those feet had climbed for her sake and with never a complaint!

"Here, darling, are the hot waffles! I didn't bring the wine jelly and cake. You'll get the cream later, and you and I don't like to mix sweets. Eat these and don't get lonesome. I'll ask Jim to take the kitten up to you if I can't run up myself."

"Oh, how good you are to me, dear Mrs. Gannett!"

The crescent moon stood white and pure against the blue of the sky. It was all so beautiful Susie had no sense of being alone since it was not really dark. She walked up and down singing "Seven times one":

*"Oh Moon, in the night I have seen you sailing
And shining so round and low;
You were bright, ah, bright, but your light is failing:
You're nothing now but a bow!"*

Susie stopped to pull off a few dead leaves from her precious heliotropes, and to pick some sprigs of the sweet-scented bloom.

"See, Susie, here's the kitten, and may I have the dishes? And did your supper taste good?"

"You've come up a third time—it's a shame! It was the most deliciousest supper I ever tasted, and it's lovely

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to have my kitten—let her lick the chicken plate before the dishes go down. Did Frankie miss me much at the table? I hear them all coming up now.”

“I guess Frankie’s beads and sash didn’t help much to stop her hunger; they never gave her a waffle at all until every one else had two, and only a drumstick of the chicken. ’Twas my pet that had the supper. Bridget tried to pop some hot waffles on her plate, but Miss Milly saw her stop, and said, ‘Mr. Wainwright’s plate is empty, Bridget,’ so Frankie got none that round.”

“Oh, that makes me think, Mrs. Gannett! Will you give this heliotrope to my dear Mr. Wainwright, and tell him I was punished and that’s why I can’t hear him sing?”

“And what’s to hinder, child alive? Every window’s open, and on the straight stairs you can hear the music perfectly; it’s better far off.”

“But won’t they see me?”

“Musha, see you, child! How could they with all the people and more coming, sitting in the three big rooms and on the verandah! They’ll be seeing each other and not looking up on dark staircases.”

“Then please ask Mr. Wainwright to sing ‘Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep.’ I do love it so, but I always cry every time I hear it.”

“That I will, my darling.”

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"And tell Frankie I'm all right, and I'm sorry about her waffles. Can't you get Ann to spare her some of the kitchen ones?"

"It's not worrying over Frankie I am. She didn't say one word for you this morning, and she could have had you downstairs as well as not. You would have said to Miss Milly, 'All right, I won't go down either!' but she went and much good it did her!" The old nurse kissed Susie and was gone. The kitten was settled in her lap purring softly. Several couples walked up and down the verandah below. Susie could peep through the rails and see them, for the lower verandah extended over the schoolroom and laundry wings. Bettina was tuning her violin. The later guests began to arrive, but not until the singing began did Susie dare go on the stairs. She sat there with the kitten in her lap. Song after song floated up. At last Mr. Wainwright sang her favorite song, and she sighed for joy. College glees broke in between the solos, and the violin and flute obligatos added much to the soothing, and Susie felt herself slipping into space. When Mrs. Gannett came up the winding stairs and down the others she found Susie and her kitten fast asleep.

"I hate to wake the poor darling, but these strawber-

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ries are the best ever I saw. Wake up, little pet." She patted Susie's hand and then slipped one ripe berry between the lips almost as red.

"I was dreaming," Susie said, opening her eyes and blinking. "It's the strawberries and ice cream! Can't the kitten take one side of the saucer? Are they all eating it now?"

"Indeed they're not! If I waited 'till then I'd be passing it so fast that I couldn't get up to you, so I got the first and the best for you. Now I'll put the berries and cream on the one plate with the cake, so that the kitten can lick the other. Does that please you, Mistress Susan?"

"It's all such fun, and you're so good to me! I'll carry the dishes up after I've put Nellie in her basket, and I'll be in bed when you come up next."

"That's a sensible darling. Now never a word when you see me running back and forth at the foot of the stairs."

Susie ate her feast so slowly that the guests finished as soon as she did. Nellie had enjoyed her treat and was tucked up in her basket on the verandah, and Susie all cosily in bed when Frankie came running up. "You didn't miss much. I was helped last and had horrid cold waffles and tough chicken, and they

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wouldn't give me jelly and cake, and when the cream came mine was all melted, and I could count my strawberries. I think that Milly was so mean not to see that I had a good time when I did all that tramping for her. I wish I'd been up here with you, or in the kitchen. I could have teased Ann for hot waffles. Bridget tried her very best to sneak things on my plate, but some one always wanted something just that minute!"

"Did my dear Mr. Wainwright wear my heliotrope?"

"Oh, yes! And he made Alice Hill so mad; she gave him a lovely rosebud, and he said, 'I am wearing little Susie's color to-night,' and when some one said, 'How good of you to sing "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep"; we all feel flattered,' he answered, 'Oh, don't misunderstand my singing it! I knew it was a failure, but to-night I sang it to please a little child.' I wondered if he knew you were in disgrace and tried to be nice to you."

"I wonder!" Susie softly answered

The serenade that was given some time after the departure of the guests was not received with enthusiasm. Mrs. Faxon told the four young ladies to sleep untroubled, for she would wake them in time to go to their windows to throw the ten wreaths the gardener had made out to the serenaders.

SUSIE IN DISGRACE

Mr. Wainwright had told Milly the number of the Glee Club who were coming.

To wake these sleepy girls sounded as if it were an easy thing to do, but it proved to be the contrary, for by the time the fourth girl responded intelligently, the first awakened had fallen to sleep again. On the lawn, between the gray stone of the house and the front wall, with evergreens on either side and elm trees waving above, the serenaders looked very attractive standing there in the moonlight, and their voices sounded very beautiful in the still air. "Stars of the Summer Night," "I Arise from Dreams of Thee," and "Huttelein" were among the selections. Mrs. Faxon longed to sit quietly to listen, for she delighted in music, and a serenade always brought to her mind the days of her youth in New Haven. The girls were all asleep again, so she had to apply cold water to their drowsy eyes. One girl leaned on each of the window sills, except sleepy Millicent, who had slipped over until her arms rested on the marble before the mirror of her bureau, her head leaning on the glass, sound asleep. The others threw out the wreaths, but one wreath was forgotten. In the morning Millicent spied this wreath as she was dressing. "How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "When we knew ten were coming, to

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throw out only nine! I hope that new, awkward man won't think we slighted him."

"Oh," said Bettina, "I know what to do—throw the wreath out of the window now, and, as the students pass on their way to breakfast they will see the wreath and think that it was their oversight and not ours, so here goes!" The wreath fell on the lawn, in plain sight from the iron-arched gateway. Bettina's was a transparent nature, and she seldom tried to deceive, and if she did the reckoning was swift and sure.

The students soon tramped by—a merry crowd.

"See!" said one, a member of the Glee Club, "there is the tenth wreath! I thought Stockwood wasn't overlooked. I'll get it." Mike was watering the lawn as the student called out, "This belongs to the serenaders, Mike. The young ladies threw it out last night and we fellows didn't see it."

"Indade, and they didn't. It's Miss Bettina with her very own hands thrun it out this minyit."

How the students laughed, while Bettina and Milly with scarlet faces watched and heard from behind closed blinds.

"It's no use, I can never deceive, and I feel so silly," moaned Bettina.

Millicent was amused, and in so good a mood after the

SUSIE IN DISGRACE

great success of her supper and musicale that nothing could disturb her happy spirit. How she regretted her severity to Susie, when her little sister gave her the biggest hug! Susie's hugs were for the few she loved. "I want to tell you, Susie, how cross I know I was yesterday. I think we were both half wrong. Now, to make up for the punishment, I'm going to take you to the gymnasium exhibition this morning, and you may sit between Mr. Wainwright and me. I kept thinking of you all last evening, up there alone in bed, and your precious nurse stolen from you to wait on my guests, and it made me very sorry."

"O, Milly darling, I'm sorry you were sorry, for what do you suppose? I had waffles and chicken on the verandah, and the other treat on the stairs, and I had my kitten and heard the music, and I was quite happy. It was Mrs. Gannett's plan. You don't mind, do you?" Milly's answer was another kiss and a longer hug. "No, darling, for I know you were punished enough for being selfish by thinking of it all day; if we all could see people's hearts as Mrs. Gannett does we wouldn't be cross and severe, and then afterwards wish we hadn't been. You and I won't misunderstand each other again. Now we must go in to breakfast."

XIII

FREDDIE'S DETECTIVE

"THIS IS a horrid day, all dull and rainy," said Susie, with her mouth that could be so pretty drawn down at the corner.

"I think so too," chimed in Frankie. "It is ten times worse when it drizzles than when it pours down in sheets. I love the barn then and the scared feeling you have when the big drops sound like bullets."

Another voice full of cheer and purpose broke in to save that day's ennui and, in fact, the monotony of many days to come. "I have a fine plan for this afternoon!" chimed in Dolly. "Gracious! If you children lived in New York then you might hate rainy days, but here! Why, there's the barn, and the bowling alley, and the dove cote, and, best of all now, the circus wagons! We can play all sorts of games in the chariot and in the big animal cages."

Dolly's eagerness was contagious and with a sudden whoop of joy the children flew out of the door to the back verandah, down the long stairs to the paved terrace below and on through the driveway to their be-

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loved barn. No hats, no umbrellas, no overshoes; these little details were held in scorn when plans were in the air.

"My!" said Dolly, "what would the girls I know in New York say if they saw me now? But I love all these wild ways. I almost wish I could stay here all next year, and not have the bother of coming out."

"What's 'out?'" said Susie. "Out of school or what?"

"Don't you know, you little ignoramus, what a debutante is?"

"Yes, I know that, of course," pouted Susie; "that's a girl who can dance in the night and sleep in the day; but that's not 'out'."

"Oh, well! Coming out's the same thing, and I don't know whether I shall like it or not; it may be quite stupid," was Dolly's reflective rejoinder.

Dorothea Fenn was a wonderfully pretty girl, bright and winning, but I must be candid and add that she could be impertinent at times. Had her manners been less engaging she would have made many enemies, but behind her teasing spirit there was a tender heart, and sympathy lurked under her love of mischief. Her sister Margaret did not understand her, and, being a debu-

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tante, she found Dolly a perfect nuisance at home. Dolly was always awake listening for her sister's return from dances; she was always bursting into the drawing-room during ceremonious "teas," or waiting on the stairs while dinner parties were in progress. On one occasion when a dance was given she borrowed the maid's black gown, white apron and cap and assisted the ladies in the dressing room. Her parents were in despair until at last they thought of the Old Stone House and their dear friend, Mrs. Faxon, and wrote asking that Dorothea might pass the winter in the atmosphere so suited in every way to her needs. She would study with Millicent and Bettina, attend a few lectures at the college, and, as it ended, play more than half the time with these younger children who adored her. Dorothea was willing to go, and, upon her arrival, dullness vanished, if indeed the days could ever be called dull in a home where such frequent excitements occurred.

The Faxon's barn was so large that, in spite of the side fitted as a gymnasium, there was abundant space left which this winter had been rented to a circus troop for the storage of four of their large wagons. Mrs. Faxon had at first refused, when asked to rent it, but Frankie, overhearing a strange man making the request, had

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begged her mother to say "Yes." "Oh, think, Mamma, of the fun we can have in the wagons when it's rainy and horrid in winter, and we can't coast," she pleaded, and Mrs. Faxon consented. The wagons, with lions and tigers painted on them, had bars of heavy iron on both sides, and, at the end, a narrow gate. The wild beasts shone through the gratings, looking very real. There was an iron ladder at the back and several steps of iron to the driver's seat. The chariot was of flaming red and gold, sea serpents were painted above the front wheels, and their heads and tails, in some marvelous way, formed the sides of a very high seat, which seemed like a throne. To this seat Dolly climbed, and there she sat, saying so many ridiculous things, and singing such funny songs, that the children were in hysterical screams of laughter, and nearly fell through the spaces between the wagons. As they climbed up the iron cage, across the top of the lion wagon and tried to jump to the tiger wagon, Susie started a game of tag, calling the chariot seat "home."

But all children after fun and frolic and undue laughter become very cross, or very mischievous, and now Dolly was in a spirit of reckless adventure. A sound was heard as of some one pushing the door, very slight, but too loud for the wind to make.

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"Oh!" whispered Susie, who was always expecting a tragic ending to every pleasure, "it's the circus man, and he will be very angry at our scratching these lovely wagons with our heels."

"You silly," snapped Frankie, "don't you know these old circus things are in winter quarters and will be all painted in the spring? Much he'd care how we played in these old wagons; if lions and tigers can ride in them, do you suppose three girls could hurt them? Listen!" There was no need of adding that, for a stealthy step was heard at the bowling alley door, and a hand was seen taking down the balls. The little boy who owned the hand was an unpopular fellow, the adored son of a weak and fond mamma. His father and big bully of a brother helped in the spoiling process. His name was Freddie Judd, and he attended the public school opposite Mrs. Faxon's orchard, which made the stealing of the fruit in its season his daily and easy occupation. Dolly loved to hide behind a tree and set the dog Sally on him, for Sally would bark and snap ferociously if urged by an ally, but when alone she was a coward and would run when she saw Freddie's stones and apples flying after her. That very morning just before nine o'clock the boy had stolen apples, and Dolly had set the dog on him, but

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Freddie was alert this time, and aimed an apple which hit Dolly on the head. It stung her cheek and hurt her pride, and she had been plotting vengeance all the morning; here was her opportunity. The afternoon was very dark; these drizzling fall rains made the huge barn, not lighted well at any time, seem twice its size and full of dark recesses and mystery. At a motion from Dolly, silence held the little sisters. Just as Freddie rolled his bowling ball, a deep sustained growl came from the chariot under which Dolly had crept. Freddie looked up, curious yet frightened. Dolly waited. The wind blew the large door shut, which gave her a chance to whisper, "Susie, get into the tiger wagon and growl long and low when I tap." Dolly then called out, "Hello, Freddie; what are you trying to steal now? Those bowling balls cost money; they're not apples, you know!"

"No one told me they belonged to you no more than the apples do," was the pert reply.

"Oh, indeed! Do they belong to you, and why are you trespassing on Mrs. Faxon's property again, sir?" Here she tapped on the circus wagon and Susie growled beautifully. Dolly wanted to sing out "Bravo!" but remembered just in time to desist.

"What's that noise?" said Freddie, with a little quaver in his voice.

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"Oh, that," answered Dolly cheerily, "is only the tiger; wait till you hear the lion—he is really savage. We are trying to win his love by almost starving him and then giving him all he can possibly eat at one time. The tiger, you see, has a baby, so we feed her three times a day, or would, if you didn't steal so many apples that there aren't enough left."

Freddie now came around from the bowling alley where he could see in the dim light the picture of the tawny tiger and the lion with the shaggy mane behind the bars.

"Gracious! Why they are real circus wagons and wild beasts in them. If they wouldn't growl so I'd like to see them."

"You better not," said Dolly. "They know me and I can feed them, but they'd spring at you in a minute. I'd tell the tiger about the apples and she'd bite you, I know."

"Tigers don't eat apples!"

"You little silly, what do you know about hippodrome tigers with a baby to feed? You never give them milk, it makes them savage. You cut up apples and potatoes with corn and oatmeal to give them and that makes them handsome and gentle. How little you do know!" Freddie crept nearer and just then the lion roared.

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"Oh!" said Dolly to herself. "That is a heavenly roar. I'd like to hug Frankie."

"I tell you, Freddie, you are such a naughty boy I just wish that one of these lions would get out and chase you. Of course, I would not let him eat you or even bite you much, but you deserve some awful punishment for all your thefts and all your lies and your stoning the dog and your impertinence to me. You stole every Bartlett pear from Susie's birthday tree, and she didn't have one! We all hate the sight of you. So there!" With this Dolly tapped both wagons, and the growls and roars were effective enough for even her dreams. Freddie was thoroughly frightened.

"Now," said Dolly sternly, "you tell me everything you ever did and I'll make out a bill of damages for Mrs. Faxon, and your greedy old father can pay it. It is mean of him to let his little precious pig steal from a widow!"

She had jumped down and caught Freddie by the collar of his blouse. He sprang away and ran toward the bowling alley door, which he tried to push. It wouldn't move. He thought it was locked, for the door opened inward and he had not discovered it. Then a tremendous roar and growl were heard. Freddie stood still and screamed with all his might.

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"You horrid old New Yorker, you've locked me in with lions and I'll have you arrested!"

Until now Dolly was really more than half in fun; she intended to get some confession and repentance from him, and then she planned to show him the pictures of the lion and tiger, and let him join in the play with the other children. But now to have the little scamp tell her she had locked him in when she hadn't was so absurd, and to have him use the word "arrest" was maddening to the last degree.

At that moment she glanced towards the mangers and between the bars and the horse's stall she saw the laughing eyes of Jim Gannett. Now she had an ally, and not only the little girls to depend on in her campaign against Freddie, for Jim had a long list of grievances against the detested child. How often Jim had planned to steal the first fruit only to find the little thief was ahead of him! Besides this he was working hard to secure the captaincy of the town baseball team, and Fred's big brother was his one enemy, who was doing all he could to prejudice the other men against the idea of having a young Irish boy for their captain. Jim was a fine athlete, for, since Mr. Faxon had given him a home, he had practiced in the gymnasium, neglecting his work to do this; he was also the best

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pitcher in town. This occasion was his opportunity. Miss Dolly with her daring and spirit would go to any length, he knew, and for once Master Freddie would be worsted.

The small boy was now not only frightened, but in a towering rage. He rushed from door to door, but as he pushed and pulled, he forgot the heavy latches and the wind baffling his efforts. Failing to open the doors, he plunged into the stables; even the cow's mild eyes flashed fire, and the horse reared. This horse "Beauty" by name, was Dolly's own. She called out, "Don't you scare my horse, you little angry fellow!"

"It's your horse, is it? Well, there!" And saying this in a high-pitched voice, Freddie grabbed the nearest implement. It happened to be a peck measure from the grain closet. He threw it at amazed Beauty. She jumped so suddenly that the halter broke, and she was loose in the passageway that led by all the other stalls. Jim, until then under cover, came out from his hiding place, and took hold of Freddie's arm in no gentle way. "How dare you scare this horse and make him break loose? I have the care of him I'd have you know, and I won't have a little jackanapes like you flinging peck measures at him, so there!"

Here followed a push. "And you will apologize to me,

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and do all Miss Dolly says, if you stay in the barn all night and have all the policemen in town hunting for you." Freddie's anger and fear in turn mastered him. "I *will* get out, I tell you! I'm as strong as you! I *won't* say I stole, and I'll have you arrested now, and my big brother'll be glad of it. You won't be captain; no baseball team wants a jail bird!"

A low growl full of threatening and slaughter followed.

"Oh!" shrieked Freddie, "please, I'm *so* scared, do let me out!"

A howl answered his wail and he sobbed aloud. It was so dark in the barn then, that Freddie standing near the stable entrance did not see Susie creep from her cage. She reached Dolly who sat on the teeter board and whispered: "Oh, I'm so hungry, and I do want my supper, and I didn't want Jim arrested! How Mrs. Gannett will cry! *Do* let's get out and let Jim take Freddie home, please Dolly dear!" But Dolly was now too indignant about Beauty's fright to heed this wise counsel.

Frankie kept up the howling to a degree that made Susie almost believe a lion was somewhere in the dark cage after all, and had eaten Frankie up. It seemed like night, but it was really only five o'clock, and just

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then the bell rang, which called the children in to dress for study hour and supper. Susie sighed with relief, for even Dolly would not dare stay longer.

"Well," Dolly said, "here's your chance, you naughty little thief. Will you own that you've done all that we know you have done, or won't you?"

"I did steal some apples, and I won't hit the dog nor Beauty again." Freddie looked rather meek as he uttered these words. Jim was loth to do it, but he opened the door, and how Freddie flew—through the garden gate, across the orchard, stopping just long enough to scream out, "I hate you, Dolly Fenn, and I will have Jim arrested this very night!" Dolly laughed at the threat, and Frankie and Jim said: "Isn't he a silly!" Susie hung her head; she was thinking that if a policeman *did* come how Mrs. Gannett would cry.

At half-after six that evening, Susie sat holding her pet kitten in her lap, and her doll in her arms on the stairs near the dining-room door. Susie loved to sit here and joke with Bridget as she went by from the kitchen to the dining-room busy over supper. Suddenly a heavy step sounded, and a strange rap was heard on the door, as if a club were hitting the thick oak panel. Susie followed Bridget in curiosity, for no one ever

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came to that lower hall entrance in the evening. The door was opened and then she hardly breathed for there stood a policeman! He seemed to her as big as the whole doorway, and his eyes, black and keen, pierced through her. "Jim Gannett lives here, and I've come to arrest him; here's the warrant. No use of his trying to escape me this time." Susie waited for only part of this sentence, but she walked and made her feet not run for fear he would suspect her plan to warn Jim and chase her. She had just left Jim in the nursery where she heard him, as usual, asking his mother for money. Up the winding stairs she flew, the long flights were passed, and, panting, she fell at Mrs. Gannett's feet. "The policeman! Freddie did it! Run, Jim! The front door!" Jim needed no other word, and was out on Elm Street and away off on a country road before Officer Hobson had finished his talk with Bridget. Bridget knew Susie's plan, for she understood how that little heart and head could work, and how those feet could fly to save Jim for Mrs. Gannett's sake. Bridget asked all possible questions: wondered why Jim wasn't in the kitchen, or playing his banjo in the hall,—she would ask Ann, at once, or would the officer look in the kitchen and laundry, and pantry, and closet? Did he see Jim at any window, did he meet

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Jim on the long side path that led by the laundry? Would he like to hide behind the door and grab Jim as he came in to supper? Strange, indeed, it was near quarter to seven, and that hungry lubber of a boy not around! Would Mr. Hobson like to see the Madam and show her the warrant?"

Every sentence meant long distances in Jim's flight. Bridget had not forgotten how often Mrs. Gannett had given her sympathy when she was in trouble, and, indeed, the policeman would have many a word yet before he got through with her. Poor Mrs. Gannett was in tears. She clung to Susie saying: "Bless you, darling, if he's not taken, it's you who've saved him. But what will the poor lad do in all this rain and not even a hat! Oh, where's the Madam till I tell her?"

Mrs. Faxon heard the whole story, but kept saying: "What is he arrested for? He isn't playing truant now, he's my errand boy, he isn't in school! I cannot understand." Susie felt her cheeks burn, but she would not tell. Holding her mother's dress she followed her down to the lower hall door, fascinated, yet in fear of the policeman. She still held her doll and looked too babyish for the officer to dream that she had warned his bird. He explained the warrant, which only increased Mrs. Faxon's bewilderment.

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"I know nothing of Freddie's tale, but I do know how he steals my apples; perhaps I'd better get an officer to arrest him. You may search the house, of course, and if you find James Gannett, I will see a lawyer and give bail for him."

All this time Dolly and Frankie were playing and singing college songs in the living room, suddenly Officer Hobson loomed upon their vision.

"Who on earth are *you*, and what do you want here?" said Dolly. Mrs. Faxon, with Susie still clinging to her, waited in the hall, till the living room should be searched.

"I have a writ for Jim Gannett, and I'm Officer Hobson!"

This was uttered much as if he had said: "I'm the Prince of Wales, and I have come to conquer your country."

"What for?" asked Dolly, whose charming appearance in soft evening garb held the officer's eyes.

"For locking Freddie Judd into a barn, where wild beasts were made to growl, causing such fright that mental derangement and fever have followed."

"Stuff and nonsense," cried Dolly, as she gaily tripped towards him, "you're a goose, and on a wild goose chase. There were no beasts in the barn except painted

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ones, and he was trespassing on Mrs. Faxon's property. He injured my horse, and he stole, so there! I'll get out a warrant for *him*, little tell-tale booby."

"Dolly," said Mrs. Faxon, "you must respect an officer of the law who is doing his simple duty."

"But it's so mean, so unjust; it's a low down trick of that horrid brother of Fred's to keep Jim from being captain. I know it is. He did nothing, sir, I planned it all and said everything and did everything. I told the lion to howl and the tiger to growl. Come here, Tiger; come here, Lion; perform for this nice gentleman." Susie wanted to, but did not dare. Frankie, seeing the humor of the situation, and never doubting the happy outcome of all seemingly difficult situations, growled so long and so loud that Mrs. Faxon almost jumped.

"Oh!" she cried, clapping her hands to her eyes.

"Doesn't she growl like an angel?" laughed Dolly.

"Do howl, Susie; policemen never are frightened—no one is who has a spotless conscience. Do you like my wild beasts and won't you please arrest me for having such dangerous creatures loose in Mrs. Faxon's living room? But really I do mean that you ought to arrest me; I had a regular pitched battle with that naughty Fred, and I did want to scare him. Jim didn't appear until just before we came up to the house, and

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it was all my idea. And, besides, the doors were not locked; the latches are heavy and always stick, and Jim Gannett only put them down hard. Do arrest me. I'd love to be in a lockup one night and then write about all you horrid policemen and jailors for the *Evening Post*; indeed I would."

Mrs. Faxon remained quiet in all her dignity, and could hardly find voice to reprimand Dolly's too fluent tongue, but now she said: "That will do, Dorothea, you only keep the officer from his investigations. Where will you go next, Mr. Hobson?"

With the air which authority often lends to those who lack native power, the poor policeman strolled through the other rooms, peering into every dark closet and corner, holding out his lantern.

"What a gump!" said Dolly. "Don't he know that Jim would run if he were here?"

Millicent was sitting by the bright lamp at the large round table, diligently finishing her composition on "Sonnets and Odes." Bettina was deep in Latin verbs as Mr. Hobson entered. They could never endure scenes, so, until the door was shut, neither one opened her lips.

"Isn't it exciting!" said Dolly, "I'll just love the court room to-morrow, for of course, I'll testify. I've longed

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all my life to see a real court room, but never dreamed I could be a speaker in one. Now all this I owe to Fred; I suppose I should forgive him everything for this boon."

"Oh, Dorothea!" said Millicent, her grey eyes full of candor and sweetness. "How can you say all this before the children if you don't mean it, and if you do, how dreadful! Think of Mother, and of all the excitement which is very bad for her heart; the expense, the trouble, not even saying a word about poor Mrs. Gannett and her tears, nor even Jim, who perhaps, in a way enjoys it, but is out in this hard rain and may be ill from exposure. I wonder where he is."

"I think I know," said Susie softly, "I'll spell it so Mr. Hobson won't hear."

"Spell it, you goosey!" said Frankie, "he can spell if he is such a stupid catcher of people."

"Then I'll whisper; I think that he is at Bridget's brother's in the loft, and they'll feed him and keep him hid, I know."

And Susie was right. Jim had wandered far out on the Green Farm road and then, hungry and tired, he quietly walked into Bridget's house. There Bob gave him all the sympathy, food, fire and jolly companionship he needed, till he fell asleep in his chair. Just at

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dawn he came home, and who should hear him knocking but little Susie, even though she was away upstairs. She had slept brokenly, feeling so sorry for Mrs. Gannett, who walked up and down the floor while Mrs. Faxon and Dorothea talked to the lawyer, who was also a family friend.

When Mrs. Gannett heard how he laughed at the case and said he could manage Jim's end of it, never fear, she had cried for joy and then had gone to bed and to sleep.

Susie slipped down to the side door of the laundry and let Jim in.

"Aren't you awfully scared?" asked Susie, whose teeth chattered with the cold.

"No, I'm just sleepy, and I guess I'll turn in until breakfast time, then slip off and see if I can't fool old Hobson yet, and reach the court house without his having the pride of taking me."

All through breakfast, Dolly's eagerness was kept in check by Mrs. Faxon's saying: "We shall have so much of lawyers and courts later, Dorothea, that now we had better talk of something else."

Susie was afraid that Jim would not get off safely. She kept imagining that the policeman's black eyes

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were watching her from some dark corner. But, when Mr. Hobson did come, he knocked boldly at the basement door, and announced in stentorian tones to Bridget, that he knew the New York girl was at the bottom of hiding Jim; hadn't he been all over the town watching; didn't he know that young truant, every inch of him; he must be hidden in the house! And now a warrant was produced for renewed search.

"This time I'll have him or know why. I'll handcuff him and drag him through the streets and you'll see what he says of Officer Hobson's way of leading prisoners to court."

Dolly, still at breakfast, heard this with exulting heart. She whispered, "If we can't talk of it, we can hear him talk, and I have the jolliest plan and may I be excused, Mrs. Faxon?"

Permission secured, she was out in the hall in a trice, and as pretty as natural beauty, youth and the latest mode of New York clothes could make her. She stood before the determined officer of the law. "Good morning!" she said brightly. "How is Jim? Did he sleep at all on those awful bunks? Wooden, aren't they? Could he eat any breakfast? And if not, won't you let Mrs. Faxon send him some? He wouldn't be allowed to eat cookies in court, or I'd bring him down some.

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If he were Freddie, now, he'd have apples enough for himself and for every one else in the jail."

"I can see right through you, young Miss; you fooled me last night but I'll be beat if you fool me this time. You've hid that fellow and you can't say you haven't, and you shan't take the satisfaction I mean to get by presenting that truant, Jim, to court."

"Why—Officer Hobson, you—you—take my breath away—I! Me! What can you mean? I haven't seen Jim since——"

"Oh, now no lies, Miss. I'll soon search the house and find him."

Dolly's eyes were so brim full of mischief she dared not raise them, but with lowered lids said: "Oh, I must fly!" and was up the spiral stairway like a bird. She locked the door of her room, and quickly placed a bolster in a position so like a sleeping person in the bed, that in the room, darkened by blinds and screens, it was most deceptive. She stood very still, waiting for the heavy step. Mr. Hobson was searching again, with Mrs. Faxon most thoroughly, and at last reached Dolly's room.

"Must you go in the young ladies' bedrooms? They are not made up."

"Yes, Ma'am, everywhere," was the businesslike retort.

FREDDIE'S DETECTIVE

He tried to open the locked door.

"Oh!" screamed Dolly, "not in here; he mustn't come into my room!"

"Dorothea, open the door at once," said Mrs. Faxon, and in Mr. Hobson walked.

Dolly hummed a tune, tapping on the window pane, and as the officer neared the bed, she screamed, falling on her knees, "Oh! Mr. Hobson, don't look! Do have mercy!"

He dragged off the covers and there lay the bolster. He was in a rage. Dolly again knelt before him. "Oh, it is such fun to cope with policemen! But you do forgive me, this time; you wouldn't take my word, you know."

Mr. Hobson then went to search Jim's sleeping room. He found very muddy boots and wet clothing. His face betrayed his chagrin. He then peered out under the corner of the roof where, the year before, Jim had hidden on that rainy day, a truant. He did not forget how Jim had joked him on the street about it afterward.

Dolly was not idle. She went downstairs to ask Bridget if any place remained unsearched.

"Why, yes, Miss Dolly; I think the billiard room closet; we all forgot."

"Then do give me Jim's overcoat and hat, and I'll hide there."

THE CHILDREN OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

As the officer was going, he said to Bridget, "I've searched the house, every corner, now for the out-buildings."

"Please, sir, did you see the billiard room closet? This way, sir."

In Mr. Hobson went, feeling in the dark corners until his hand touched an overcoat, then a sudden move sent a hat off.

"Now, young man, here you are. Now we'll see who has the best of this little game."

What a laugh burst forth! Too long stifled to be kept under one moment more, and Dolly's eyes looked up into his as she said:

"It is mean to tease you so, but I can't help it, you are so solemn and professional and it is all such a silly, goosey business. Why can't you see how absurd it all is and just laugh?"

Mr. Hobson's eyes were shooting at her the feelings words could not utter, and defeated and chagrined he stalked away trying to remember that he represented the law.

To the amazement of Mrs. Faxon and Dolly, Jim joined them on the court house steps. He had passed Mr. Hobson in the hall, as their lawyer greeted them. This was a small country town and the ways were

FREDDIE'S DETECTIVE

far from urban. When the case was called: "Judd versus Gannett," Dolly's eyes danced. This was her hour.

The lawyer for the plaintiff dwelt effectively on the youth of the child, his sensitive organism, his delicate body, the cruelty of the big bully in his strength to take advantage of defenseless weakness. The red tape seemed endless to Dolly, but at last the father and the mother and the big brother had testified as to Freddie's moans in his sleep when he did sleep, his cries of fear, his weakened nervous condition. Then the doctor was called to give his medical opinion.

Dolly was a witness for the defendant. It was truly the supreme moment of her life. Mrs. Faxon was so amazed and so amused at the sudden changes from pathos for the sufferings of the dog and the horse and Susie to laughter as the answers about the prisoner and the wild beasts, that she could hardly believe that it was not all a dream.

The judge in summing up the evidence said that if very young children would steal apples before and after every session of school, he supposed their night's rest would be broken and the doctor's attendance would be needed. He found the prisoner not guilty and ordered his discharge. Dolly wanted to hug him. Mrs.

THE CHILDREN OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

Faxon's lawyer shook hands heartily with Jim and said as an aside to Mrs. Faxon, "Isn't that young lady from New York a wonder! I wish my own son were as clever as she; he could beat every lawyer in this town."

Mrs. Faxon was so relieved and rejoiced that she allowed Jim to walk by her side as far as the post office where he stopped for the mail. She and Dolly went home to tell every detail to Mrs. Gannett and anxious little Susie. Frankie was so disgusted that she couldn't be a witness that she would not give Dolly the satisfaction of listening to her, but waited for Susie to tell her all about the trial.

In the early spring it was the custom in Davenport to have annual firemen's and policemen's parades. After the marching was over, a substantial dinner was served in Mechanics' Hall. Elm Street was the most beautiful street in Davenport for the walls and fences were separated from the sidewalks by well-kept turf and tall maple trees. On either side of the carriage road, too, was grass and shade trees.

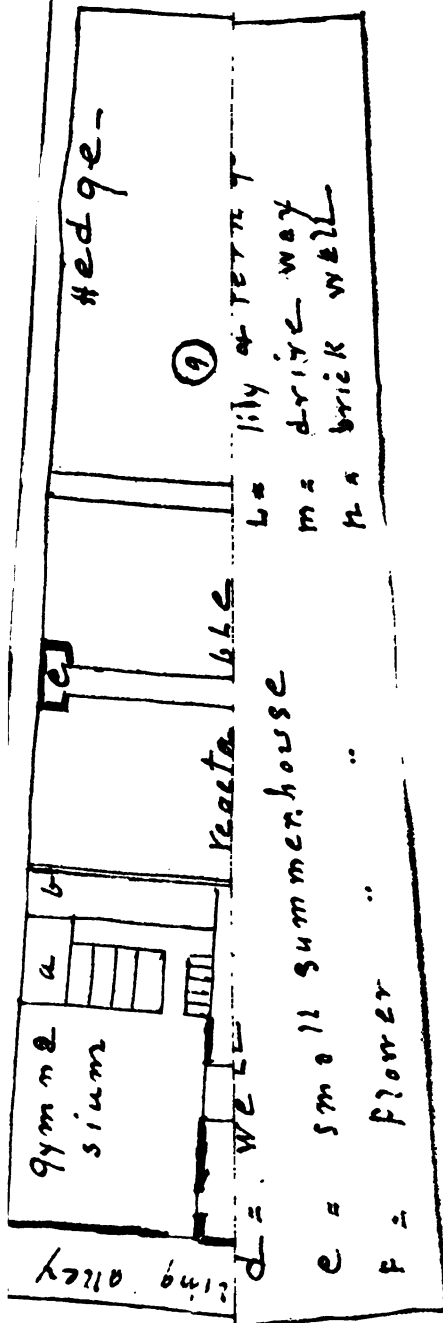
Mrs. Faxon usually sent a generous subscription for the firemen, as they were volunteers, and she had also allowed the old fashioned fire engines to remain in

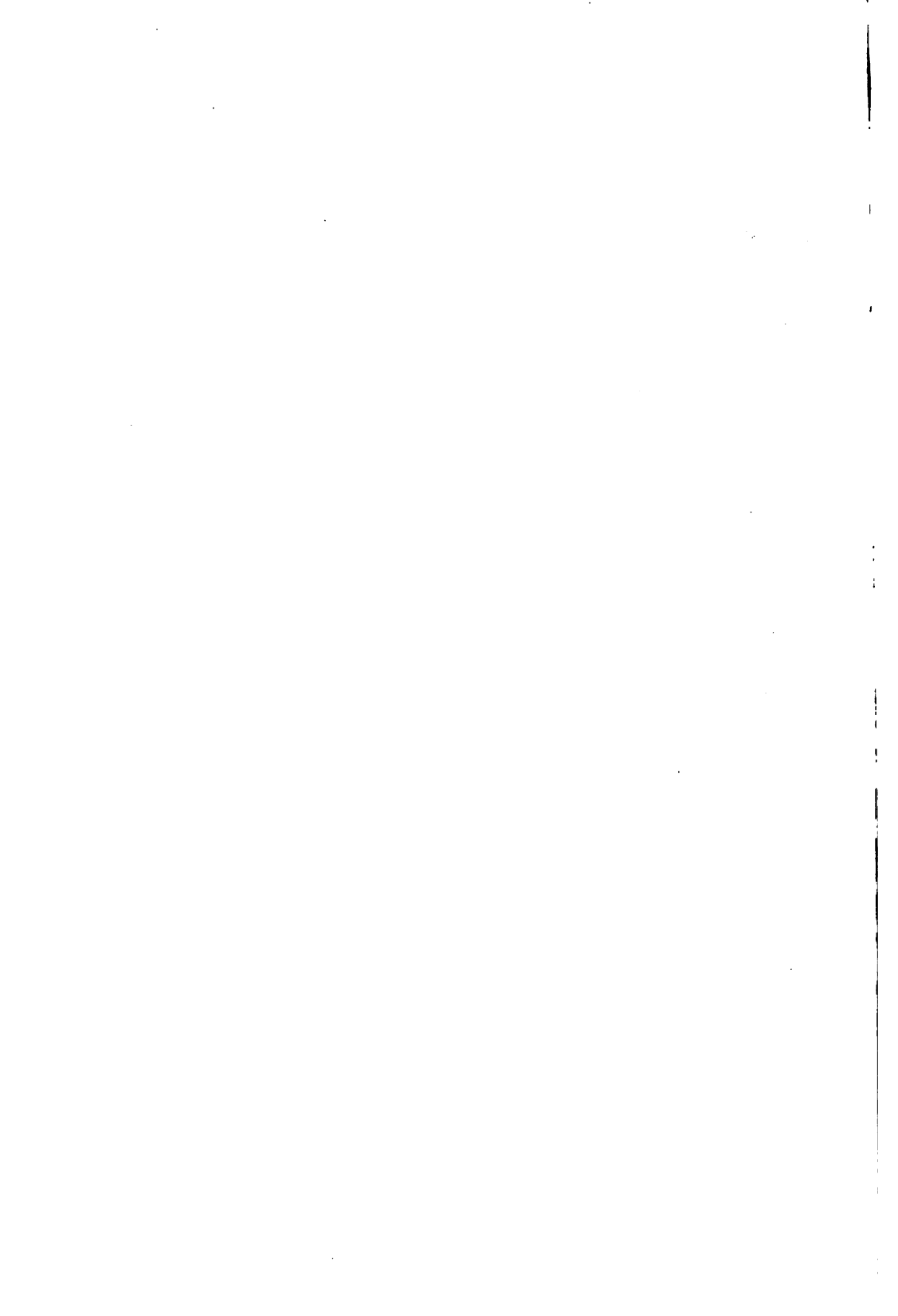
FREDDIE'S DETECTIVE

her carriage house free of charge. For these gratuities, the firemen had a pleasant custom of halting and cheering before the Old Stone House, but to-day, the policemen, too, had an air of eagerness as they cheered. Before the procession moved on, Dolly left the steps, ran down the walk, jumped on the carriage block and then right into the line of marching men. The surprised men looked up, lost step and stopped as Dolly made a low bow before Officer Hobson and, presenting him with a beautiful bunch of Mareschal Nil roses, said clearly and with laughing eyes, "With congratulations for the way you *didn't* catch Jim Gannett!"

The flowers were very costly and very beautiful, and the saucy speech could easily be overlooked by Mr. Hobson, who had that morning received a check for twenty-five dollars from Miss Dorothea Fenn, "hoping the gift would add a second plate of ice cream to the policeman's dinner."

As the men smoked and chatted after the so-called banquet, Mr. Hobson was heard to say, "I believe that the girls that are smartest have the best hearts, after all."





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